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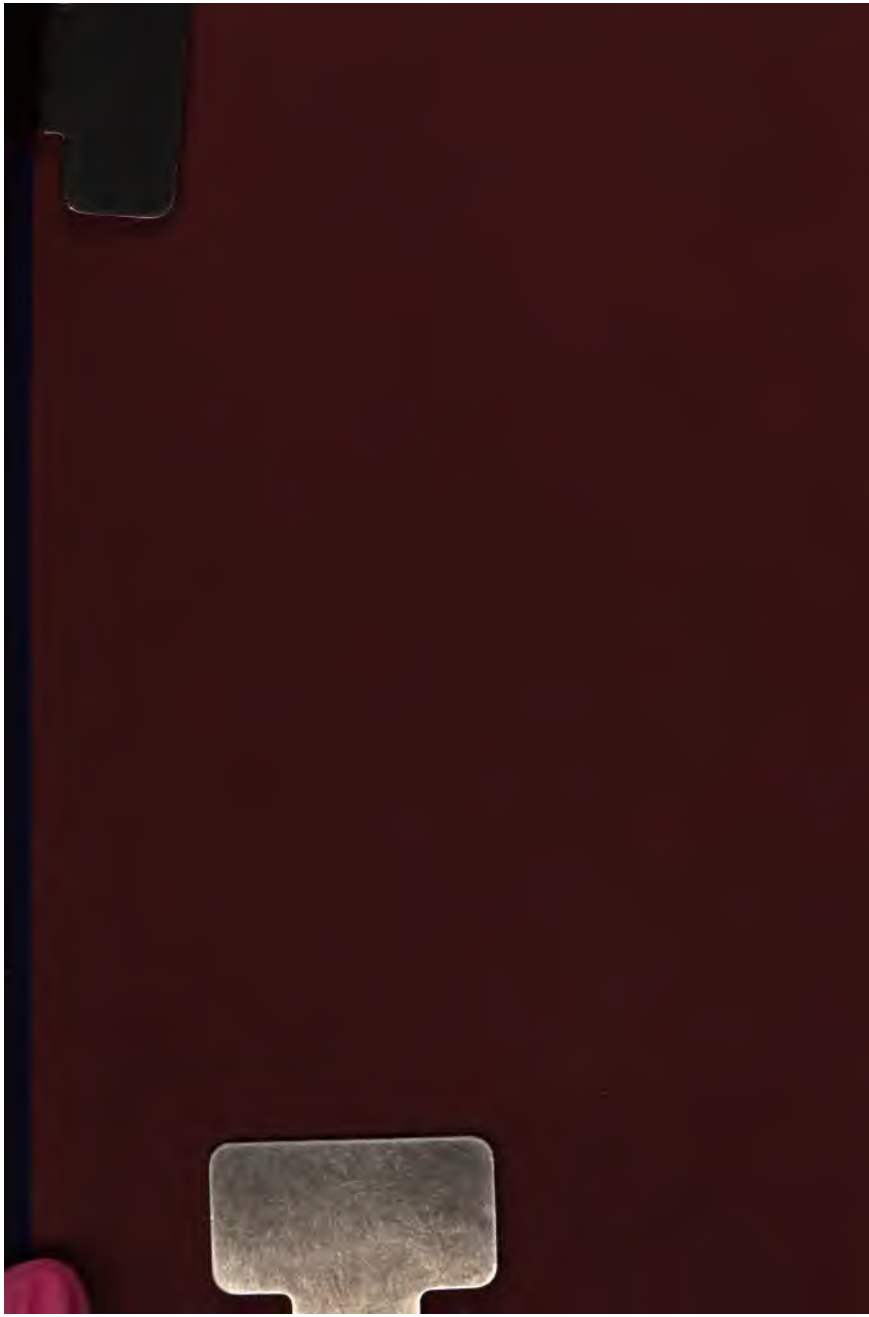

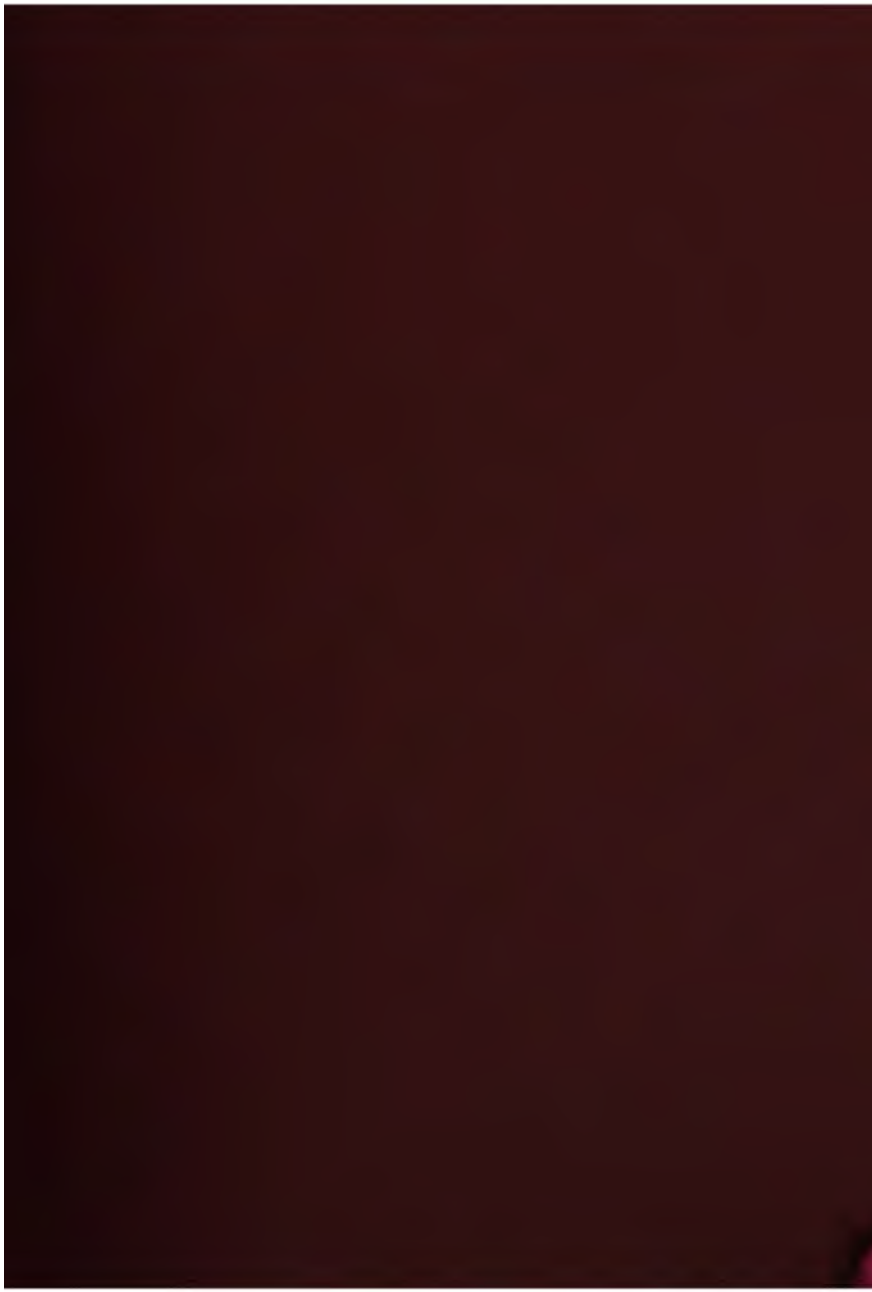

LECTURES.

"The Name which is above every name,"
AND
"The Shepherd and His Flock."

LECTURES

PREACHED IN PORTMAN CHAPEL,

DURING LENT 1866 AND 1867.

BY

J. W. REEVE, M.A.,

TRIN. COLL., CAMB.,
MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.

LONDON:
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TO

THE CONGREGATION OF PORTMAN CHAPEL

These Lectures

ARE INSCRIBED BY

THEIR

AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND MINISTER,

J. W. REEVE.

112 Harley Street,
June 10, 1867.

"The Name which is above every name."

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LECTURE I.

"THE SON GIVEN."

ISAIAH ix. 6.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

THE subjects of these lectures will be the names of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the text; the relation in which He stands to His Church and people; and the privileges they have in Him. I shall try to point out the practical comfort there is for all believers in dwelling on these names, and the characteristics involved in them. They

are subjects of vital importance to every one of us; and if, as I trust is true, we have taken our stand on Christ and His Word, if we have taken God's Son and God's Word, as our portion and heritage for ever, we shall be interested to know more of our riches in Christ Jesus.

The Deity and all-sufficiency of our great and glorious Redeemer are a source of joy to all who trust Him, and it is our conscious interest in them which alone will enable us to triumph over all the outward circumstances of life, and will pour peace into the soul when our hopes from human things are at the lowest ebb; for it is the glory of the Gospel of Christ, that it not only smoothes the rough places in life's path, supports in sorrow, and strengthens in temptation, but that it sustains and cheers in life's last mortal struggle.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious object in which our hearts should be centred —the point round which our thoughts should

be ever revolving; for here alone are real help and happiness to be found. That Christ is mine, and I am His, is strength in service —consolation in sorrow—repose in death. The blessed hope of His coming for us, or calling us to Him, will make our life here what nothing else can make it—happy and contented; and then, whether our service be active or passive, we shall be able to realise our oneness with Christ, and the exalted privilege of being a Christian.

These names and titles of our Lord, when understood by the Holy Spirit's teaching, will supply this blessed portion.

The subject now is the *Supreme Authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1. "*The government shall be upon His shoulder.*"

It was no doubt the design of the Holy Spirit in this passage to point out the coming and kingdom of Christ, and He speaks of the blessings as if already conferred; "Unto *us*," says the prophet, "a child is born." This is the peculiarity of faith. It lays hold on

"things not seen," and makes them a present portion. Isaiah took the present comfort of a future promise by faith. Can you, dear brethren, do the same? Can you now see the government so upon Christ's shoulder, as to realise that your individual matters are being ordered for you by Christ? The angels said, "Unto *you* is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" and this child is born for the benefit of us men, sinners, all believers from the beginning to the end of time. "Unto us a son is given." The only-begotten Son of God is given to us and for us, to become the Son of man, that He might be our Surety, Sacrifice, Advocate, Salvation; that we might have peace through His blood, safety under His protection, and guidance from His wisdom. He was given by the Father, and He gave Himself for this purpose.

I shall say no more on this part of the text, but pass to our subject, "*The govern-*

ment shall be upon His shoulder." This, I repeat, declares the supreme authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. This authority, He has as Mediator, to which dignity He was exalted after His resurrection: for then it was, He was "declared to be the Son of God with power" (Rom. i. 4). The other steps of His exaltation, viz., His ascension into heaven, His sitting down at the right hand of God, His receiving "a name which is above every name"—all tended in the same direction, and the result of all is, that "the government is upon His shoulder." But as Creator of the universe, Christ must of necessity have also been the Governor of it before His incarnation. When sin undermined the pillars of the world, they must have fallen, had not Christ then, as ever since, "upheld all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3). Still this government was not put into His hands, as Mediator, but on the supposition of His death. It was when He was given to us as a Son that the

government was put upon His shoulder. He was given to us in promise, before He was given to us in the flesh. And in that first promise wherein it is said He should "bruise the serpent's head," His death is supposed by the serpent's "bruising His heel." He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Now if the great end of His government, namely, the salvation of souls, was performed by Him, before His incarnation, so the government was conferred upon Him too. As believers were saved by Him before His coming, because He was to die; so the world was governed by Him, for the same reason. Hence, He was the angel of the Lord in delivering His Church (Acts vii. 35). The captain of the Lord's hosts in fighting their battles (Josh. v. 14). The guardian of the Church, and an advocate for them in their distresses (Zech. i. 8–13). And it was His glory, attended by angels to perform His will, that Isaiah saw (Isa. vi. 1, 2, and John xii. 41).

But this government was absolutely confirmed upon His death. It was upon the ground of having "by Himself purged our sins," that He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High" (Heb. i. 3); and it was after His death and resurrection that He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), and in anticipation of this, we read, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John iii. 35).

Thus we have in the text, not only His power, but the vast extent of it: "The Father hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to His Church" (Eph. i. 22), and there is nothing that is not put under His control and authority. The Church is more especially subjected to Him, as well for the purpose of communicating His influence to His members, as of managing its concerns; and so entirely is everything under Him, that not a hair

falls from the head of His Church, but by His righteous permission.

All these things teach us Christ's right to govern the world, and to dispose of all things in it according to His sovereign will and pleasure, inasmuch as "all things were created by Him, and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 16, 17).

God's object all along has been to glorify Christ, and put Him in the place of supreme authority. We have this taught in the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. xxii.); in which the guests are invited to do honour to the Son. We have the same taught us throughout the Holy Scriptures. For example, all the promises go to this point: to Him they were made before the world began, in Him they are all "yea and amen." All the commands tend to glorify Christ, and they are all summed up in this, "This is His commandment, that ye believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ."

All the ordinances are to exalt Christ. All preaching is to preach Christ. All the services of God's house, as well as of believers, are to glorify Christ. The work and blessedness of the Church triumphant is still to praise Christ; to sing hallelujahs to "Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Again, in all the names put upon Him, He has the same supremacy. Is He classed among lords? then He is "Lord of lords." Among kings? then He is "King of kings." Among princes? then He is "the Prince of the kings of the earth." Among prophets? then He is that Prophet men are commanded to hear at their peril. Among priests? then He is the "Great High Priest."

Now I have mentioned all this just to show you the place assigned to Christ, and how, as a necessary consequence, "the government is upon His shoulder." He is "Lord of all." Angels are His servants; devils are His captives; all flesh is in His hand. He

holds both the golden sceptre for the penitent to kiss, and the iron rod with which the wicked are destroyed. The government of the Church, and the government of the world are with Him. He is the great Disposer of all events, the great Dispenser of all blessings. If the government were not upon His shoulder, it would destroy the perfection of His mediatorship, but "all things," He says, "are delivered unto me of My Father." As all the affairs of Egypt were delivered by Pharaoh to Joseph, so all the affairs of the world are delivered to Christ. If, therefore, you are looking to Him for one thing, you will for everything. There is nothing that is not put under Him. All things in heaven, and earth, and hell, are under His government as Mediator (Phil. ii. 10, and Eph. i. 22). All the reins of common providence in the world, as well as of special providence in the Church, are in His hand. 1. Take *common providence.* What is His language (Prov. viii. 15)? "By Me kings

reign and princes decree justice." When He wills, He cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: But God is the judge, he putteth down one and setteth up another" (Ps. lxxv. 6, 7). Empires and monarchies rise and fall according to His will; one having the upper hand to-day and another to-morrow. As soon as one has done its work, another rises to begin its own. War, peace, famine, pestilence, revolution, quietness, all do their work exactly, and are all over-ruled for the good of the Church. And when we turn our thoughts to the heavens and the earth, and all their various systems and economies, how stable is His government! Sun, moon, and stars in their courses are His servants: they maintain their various orbits with the most unvarying regularity: and though millions of miles have to be traversed, yet they re-appear at their appointed time with unfailing precision.

The seasons, too, as they march their wonderful round, all do His bidding. Summer and winter, day and night, seed-time and harvest, never fail. And to think that all these vast concerns are lying on one mind, and yet that nothing is forgotten, nothing is neglected, nor administered but in the best possible way, and for the certain accomplishment of His glorious end. What a mind it must be! Never encumbered or oppressed by the weight of these overwhelming concerns, never perplexed by their intricacy, nor distracted by their infinite variety. How marvellous that no two lines of action are ever confused, or, by mistake, run together: but that all proceed with the calm deliberation of single acts, as if one had no bearing on the other; and yet that all, gradually step by step, are working together for good, and carrying out to completion God's great and glorious plan.

2. *The government of His Church.* How vast are the interests here! Before these,

the government of this world shrivels up into nothing; for here He deals with immortal souls, with a kingdom that shall have no end. The time of our sojourning here, and the number of our days, are in His hand. The time of His drawing near to the soul, and the time of His staying, are all with Him. It is He who says, "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." And when they are quickened, and made alive, it is He who says, "Awake, O north wind; and come thou south: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (Cant. iv. 16). And to think that each child's wants are as clearly seen, and as accurately provided for, as if there were but one; that each dispensation is exactly fitted to the case; that there is no confusion, no mixing one case with another; that He watches with the utmost interest, not merely the ways and words, but the thoughts, and feelings, and desires; the hopes and fears, the joys and

sorrows of all His children—measuring, correcting, counting, meting, guiding them with the most exact precision and to the greatest advantage. Some of us know what it is to watch a beloved child; to trace the budding mind, to direct the opening faculties, to restrain, to prune, to encourage, as the case may be: and when our care has to be extended to the thoughts, affections, and desires, how soon we are overpowered! But what is our Lord's care!—extended not to one, but to all, to the multitude of His children throughout the world. He is dealing with every one, and doing it in the best way; and all their infinitely-varied wants and supplies are being gradually headed up into a grand climax, which is to display His everlasting glory, and their salvation. What seems to us inextricable confusion, is governed by Him with the most perfect harmony and order; and must we not say, in the language of the Psalmist, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!

Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens" (Ps. viii. 1). Yes! He has power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as are given to Him. Every act of His government tends to this end. How blessed and how glorious, and how sweet at last to see the whole combination! How unanimously every providence has conspired to this end, which now our ignorance cannot discern! Oh! if we could but believe this in our own particular case—that God is doing the best for us that could be done—that each cross and trial is but His way of blessing and preparing us for His rest. What a difference it would make in the tone and peace of our mind! But as Jesus perfectly finished His redeeming work on earth, so the government is upon His shoulder to carry this work on in the hearts of all His Church, whom He has "purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28), and He is fully furnished for the purpose. As He has paid the price—precious blood—so He will do it by power, by

applying and giving out the blessings He has bought. His work is now to "give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him" (John xvii. 2), and this requires great power; for it is a work to be carried on among all nations and languages, among all kinds of characters and dispositions, against all hindrances and oppositions; but He knows what is suitable to effect it. It is the simple gospel, confirmed by His power, which is effectual to save and to set up His government in the heart. And it is the way in which the Lord works with Scripture, "confirming the word, with signs following" in the life (Mark xvi. 20), which gives ministers heart to preach, or men power to learn. The apostles, a company of weak, unlearned men, might well shrink from the arduous character of their work, but the Lord says, "Lo, I am with you," and in this way the work is done. For He has to do with sinners such as you and I are; gross, terrible, hardened sinners; but this presents no hin-

drance; for this is He who made the world out of nothing, and upon whose shoulder is the government. He can convert sinners, subdue rebels, and draw whom He will to His footstool, in order to exalt them to sit with Him in the heavenlies. There is perhaps a hard and stony heart here now; but He is able, even out of stones, to raise up children.

His work is to justify the ungodly, and He does it freely by His grace: His work is to forgive sin, and He does it by His blood. Had He as Son of man, when on earth, power to forgive sin? much more now that He is "exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, for this very purpose" (Acts v. 31). Yes! He can turn those who by nature are children of wrath into children of God; and children of Satan into heirs of God and joint heirs with Himself. Let the bonds of sin be never so strong, let the sense of guilt and wrath lie never so heavily on the conscience, let the power of lust and temptation be

never so imperious; here is One that can burst the bonds of sin, heal the wounded conscience with His own blood, cast down the power of temptation, so that it falls like Dagon before the ark of God, and the captive is delivered. Oh! we are privileged to find all things in Christ. Is He the light of life? He is also the light of the morning, for it is His sun that rules the day. Is He the God of the spirits of all flesh? He is also of the dew of Hermon that falls on the hill of Sion. Does He pour out showers of blessing on His people? He sends forth also the showers that water the earth. If His be the refreshing air we breathe, His also is the fire of life and divine love which is the breath of spiritual existence.

Yes! as all government is on His shoulder, so all grace is in His hand, justifying, sanctifying, saving grace: all the graces of the Spirit. Do you need grace to believe? It is in His hand, who is the Author of faith. Do you need grace to repent? It is with

Him, who is a "Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts v. 31). Do you need grace to pray? He has the Spirit of prayer to give, even the "spirit of grace and of supplication" (Zech. xii. 10). In a word, do you want grace to mortify sin, to bear the cross, to resist temptation, to do, and to suffer? You must come to Him who says, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and it is on this account that all His people are called to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Observe the glorious dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ! How suitable is such a Head to the wants of such a body as the Church! How well is the government upon His shoulder! None could have fulfilled the office so honourably to God, so suitably to His Church and people! Nor could the Church have so responsible a Ruler as the Lord Jesus Christ. God demanded of Him payment of the infinite debt, and He paid it to the last farthing: help was laid on one that is

mighty, and now, in His exalted state, intrusted with the work of saving by the power of His Spirit all whom He redeemed with the price of His blood, He is no less responsible: being "able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25). Here is your comfort, believing souls; on Christ lies the responsibility of saving all His Church, and if He failed not in obedience and death and resurrection, surely He will not in exaltation, but the government being on His shoulder, all His people are safe.

When we think of the character of Him on whose shoulder is the government of all things,—how kind and great and wise and able to save, how encouraged should we be to seek to put ourselves into His hand, to give ourselves up to be saved by Him! He is "able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. ix. 8). He can "make the feeble

among you as David, and David as the angel of the Lord" (Zech. xii. 8). Remember, His inexhaustible fulness is to be dispensed and communicated to sinners. "He hath received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also" (Ps. lxviii. 18), and every invitation is as if He said, "The government is upon my shoulder;" "I have all things in my hand for thee: I have life, pardon, peace, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all grace, and all glory, and they are all for thee."

LECTURE II.

WONDERFUL.

Isaiah ix. 6.

"And His name shall be called Wonderful."

No title could with greater reason be given to our great Redeemer than this, for He is Wonderful, and "alone doeth great wonders" (Ps. cxxxvi. 4). Consider Him in any point of view—as God, as man, or as God and man in one Christ—He is "Wonderful." If you contemplate His works in creation or redemption, "Wonderful" is written on them all. If you regard His dealings in Providence or grace, the same must be said,—"Wonderful." If you look at His Word, which displays especially what He is, "wondrous things" are seen in every page. All

that Christ did, all that He suffered, both to make "an end of sin and to bring in everlasting righteousness," is wonderful and glorious. There is, indeed, no end to the wonders wrought by our adorable Saviour. He is "Wonderful" in His love and mercy, in His hatred of sin and love of holiness, in His compassion to the vilest, and the method He took to baffle Satan and overcome death. In every part of His character and work He may be justly called "Wonderful." The angels are represented as with outstretched necks still desiring to know more of what Christ has done; devils have felt and been overwhelmed by His power; while man, for whom such wonderful things have been done, and the most interested of all creatures in the blessings of Christ, is he who, if left to himself, is least impressed by them.

He who in the text is called "Wonderful," is the same of whom we spoke last week as having the "government upon His shoulder," and doing all things for us. This is "the

Angel of the Lord" who appeared to Manoah and his wife (Judges xiii. 14), and when asked His name, said, "It is secret;" in the margin it is "Wonderful." Commentators say it is the same Hebrew word used in both places. We may therefore, I judge, understand "Wonderful" in the sense of secret or mysterious, or beyond our grasp to understand fully; and so surely it is inasmuch as it is one of the names of Jehovah-Jesus.

As a proof that this name was not misapplied in the Old Testament to the great Redeemer, we find in the New Testament that He constantly showed His right to the appellation by the continued series of miracles which He wrought. Here we see Him, as Job says (Job ix. 10), "doing great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." These show Him to be the Lord of hosts, "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isa. xxviii. 29). Signs and wonders were constantly done in His name (Acts iv. 30). But what, perhaps, is

the greatest wonder is that this wonderful Being should have stooped to become man; should have emptied Himself of His glory for us men, and for our salvation. But so it was, and this furnishes every believer with a song of praise: "O Lord, thou art my God: I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name: for thou hast done wonderful things. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa. xxv. 1). And just in proportion as we know more of the wonders of His faithfulness and truth, we are more and more astonished that such wondrous things should be done for us. For every believer has a right to the whole of that which Christ has purchased for all believers. It belongs not only to all the Church of Christ in general, but to each member in particular. What a word for a believer! A full Christ for thee: though the least of the little ones that believe in Jesus:—He came to redeem them all, and thee among them. And His redemption would not have been complete without

thee; for the covenant of grace would not be complete without the weakest and least believer. So be of good cheer! He who has made His covenant sure, has made thy name sure therein for ever.

We have to consider Jesus as "Wonderful," and it is difficult to say whether He is more wonderful in what He has revealed of Himself, or in what is still "Secret," and hereafter to be revealed. Were everything secret and concealed, we should be left in darkness and death, and have no conception of His wonderful Being. Were nothing secret, but all revealed, we should be in danger of losing that "reverence and godly fear" with which we contemplate so wonderful a Saviour. But by a wise combination of revelation and secrecy, by telling us something, but not all, He furnishes a field for our faith, and leaves our unbelief without excuse, and thus produces the most suitable impression on the minds of His fallen creatures. And in the midst of all that is "secret" to us in the

mind and ways and character of Jesus, there is this always revealed, as "an Anchor of the soul," that He is man's Saviour; "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 15). Whatever else is concealed, His character of Saviour never is.

But this character of "Wonderful" and "Secret" is visible in our Lord—

1. In *what He is.* God's revelation of Himself since the fall has ever been of this mixed character. His presence has been heard and felt but not seen, *e.g.* (Gen. iii. 8, &c.) Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God and were afraid, but they saw nothing. Again, observe the case of Moses (Exod. iii. 2, &c.), his attention was attracted by a burning bush which was not consumed, but when he turned aside to see why the bush was not burnt, he was forbidden. Here was the combination of "Wonderful" and "Secret." So when He journeyed with Israel, it was in a pillar of cloud by day,

and of fire by night. This cloud was the token of His presence. There God was, and this was Israel's comfort; but this comfort was the peculiar privilege of faith, for the cloud concealed Him, so that His presence was both "Wonderful" and "Secret." It was so at the dedication of the temple by Solomon. "The priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings viii. 11). There was the symbol of the divine presence which was "secret" in the cloud, there was the subsequent glory which was "wonderful," and too much for the priests to bear. It was so at the Transfiguration. When the disciples saw the glory, although Peter spoke, "He knew not what he said" (Luke ix. 33). But when the cloud appeared, they knew it as the symbol of the divine presence, and "they feared as they entered the cloud;" but still it was out of the cloud the Lord spoke words of instruction. "This is My beloved Son,

hear Him" (Luke ix. 35). Thus, though it may fill us with awe that "clouds and darkness are round about Him," yet it may relieve us to remember that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Ps. xcvii. 2). He is "Secret" that we know not all. He is "Wonderful" in telling us so much.

But when we try to think of what He is, how is the mind lost! We read in Job xi. 7, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" We read, for example, in Scripture, He possesses certain attributes which are perfect and illimitable, that He is without beginning and without end: how this can be is both "Secret" and "Wonderful." That He can maintain the closest acquaintance and contact with all parts of His universe, that He can be all eye, all ear, all presence, all power, at all times and in all places; hearing the words, seeing the ways, knowing the thoughts of all men; controlling, guiding

all, yet without interfering with their responsibility,—these are truths most certain: but how it is, is both "secret" and "wonderful."

2. In *what He does.* The steps by which God works show us how truly "wonderful" He is in working, while the design He has in view is very often as truly "secret." See this illustrated in the history of Joseph! What a secret thread ran through all his life, from his visit to Dothan, to his riding in the second chariot in Egypt: but how wonderful the result. The education again of Moses and Paul, how secret the purpose, how wonderful the accomplishment.

So with ourselves, there are many events connected with the history of each of us, the meaning of which we have not learned and is still "secret." We have seen things truly "wonderful." How one has been prospered, and another cast down: how one man rolls in wealth and has more than heart can wish, while another can scarcely obtain the necessaries of life: how one is "in deaths oft," and

another seldom loses relative or friend : how one is in constant trouble, and another seems never to have a cross : how one is cut off in the midst of usefulness, and others that are apparently useless through infirmity, or drones through indolence, are left !

Again, how large a portion of the earth is still in heathen darkness and idolatry, and how small a part knows the blessings of the gospel. All these things are "wonderful" and their design is "secret," but still that "all things are working together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28), we cannot doubt.

Again, although the Christian is told to forget the things "that are behind, and to reach forth to those things that are before" (Phil. iii. 13), what obscurity hangs over the future ! We are told to "work while it is called to-day," for "we know not what shall be on the morrow." We know not what a day may bring forth, and are not sure of an hour. The future is ever in the

hand of God, and is ever "secret." No one can be sure that any of his plans will ripen and be successful, or any hope or fear will be realised: still we are to work on in full confidence of God's blessing. Every day is opening some fresh page in our history, but who can say what the contents of that page will be. We hope, and we strive, and we pray, but after all we are but too familiar with disappointment; and yet, in the midst of all our perplexities, everything is going on according to His will, "He giveth no account of His matters" (Job xxxiii. 13). Much is "secret," all is "wonderful."

Take, again, some points in redemption—"Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). How God and man should become one Christ, one man, without the natures being either identified or confounded, is indeed what belongs to Him who is both "Secret" and "Wonderful;" but it is in this way alone that the blood shed on the cross becomes the blood of God's

own Son, and possesses that marvellous efficacy to cleanse from all sin. Think of the love to man in all this; what it has done for us, what it is to us, what it will do. Think of His love: in all His works and ways, and though His blessing may in many cases be "secret," yet is He not rightly called "Wonderful!"

Again as to the operations of the Holy Spirit of God, by whom the truths of Scripture are applied to the heart of man. Is He not, as the Spirit of Christ, "Wonderful" and "Secret"? We read, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). All believers know by experience the power of the Holy Spirit, but how He operates is "secret;" where His power on man's will and heart and conscience begins, and man's will and power cease, and how these are blended and act and re-act one on the other: when old

things begin to pass away, and all things begin to become new: and when it is true that old things have passed away, and all things are new,—who shall say? All we can say is, Christ's work is done, men are converted and saved, but He is "wonderful" in working, and "Secret" too.

3. In *what He says.* Take, for example, Prophecy. While God's foreknowledge shows He has a just claim to the title of "Wonderful," yet the way in which it is expressed, is often such as to render interpretation, except in general terms, "secret." The design of prophecy is scarcely to inform us with respect to the detail of events, except, of course, where they are expressly given, but to furnish us with great leading points on which to take our stand, and patiently to await the fulfilment. And while the events themselves correspond with the prophecy in a manner which shows He who planned them is "wonderful in counsel," the steps by which they are accomplished are often such

as to show that He is "secret in working."

The human agents, too, by whom these purposes are worked out, are usually altogether ignorant that they are fulfilling the counsels of Heaven. They follow the dictates of their own minds, they act according to their own inclinations, and have no thought of being instruments in the hands of God. What a text is this, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation" (Isa. x. 5). The Assyrian little thought he was merely a rod in God's hand to chastise His own people; nor did Cyrus suppose, when he set out for Babylon to deliver them, that the hand of God had prepared him and his way for the work. As little did Herod and Pilate and the Jews, when they delivered Jesus to be crucified, think they were working out "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii. 23). And yet they were all responsible for their conduct to Him who is

"Wonderful" in His purpose, and "Secret" in the steps of it. And although the treachery of Judas had been announced by the prophet David, yet so "secret" was it to him, that Judas acted as closely in accordance with the dictates of his own heart, and the peculiarities of his own character, as if God had never spoken nor acted at all. And so of the great events which have been foretold, and which have affected the condition of the world. Did the human agents know they were fulfilling Scripture? No; in most cases nothing was further from their view. "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so" (Isa. x. 7). They were merely gratifying their little passions and pursuing their own selfish ends. They were but the axe in the hand of the Lord, wherewith He heweth. The language of prophecy may be dark and obscure, but the fulfilment is accurate and wonderful.

So with the truths of Christianity. Some

things are clearly expressed, so that the simplest child may understand; but some are so deep that they pass man's understanding; and indeed in all gospel truth, seeing it is the offspring of an infinite mind, there is a depth which is never fully comprehended by some. This is especially true of the spiritual meaning of Scripture. This is absolutely hidden from the "natural man" (1 Cor. ii. 14). And so the Holy Spirit is promised that "we may know the things that are freely given of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12); and then when the Holy Spirit works, dead men are quickened to life, and dark things become light. But *when* the natural yields to the spiritual, and *how* death is quickened into life, is with Him who is "Wonderful" and "Secret."

It is not meant that spiritual life is "secret" in the sense that it is not understood; no, it is felt, and understood, and enjoyed,—but how it is wrought in us is for Him, not us, to say. The effect is plain

enough in changed affections and habits and tastes; but how it is brought about is "secret." And when spiritual life first quickens the soul—when spiritual light first enters the understanding—when spiritual feeling first influences the heart—when there is the first drawing of the Holy Spirit to Christ, to His Word, His will, His people—when the first power of real faith comes by which we just touch these things, and begin to deal with them as if they were really our own—all this is usually "secret," and to be ascribed only to Him who is "Wonderful" in all His ways.

Do you need wonders to be wrought for you? Christ can do them. All grace is "wonderful," and so is every step of salvation. It is a wonder that any sinner is saved, but Christ can do it; and one lesson He would teach us by the mingled light and mystery of His Word, in His dark and trying dispensations, is, *Submission to Himself.* He would have us trust Him implicitly, put

ourselves, body and soul, into His hands; look to Him for everything, and hang upon Him too; and this whether our path be dark or bright; whether it be marked by joy or sorrow. He would have us trust Him as One who is so "Wonderful" that He can bring light out of darkness, turn our sorrow into joy, and cause our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17); and, at the same time, so "Secret" that we must trust Him, like blind men, to be led and guided always.

But although He is "Wonderful" and "Secret" in His being, ways, works, and words, yet He is also "Wonderful" in His love and the simplicity with which He has declared the way of salvation. It is true you know not when you will die, but you know that you are mortal. You know not the particulars which will succeed death, but you know there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. He

has told us that if we believe not in Him we shall die in our sins, and that such as die in unbelief will go to everlasting misery, while those who die trusting in the Son of God will be taken to everlasting life and blessedness. He has also told you the way of life so plainly, that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. xxxv. 8). He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6). He has told you of a perfect remedy for sin, that though you are guilty, His blood can cleanse from all sin, and that faith in Him will cause that you stand "holy and unblamable, and unreprovable in His sight" (Col. i. 21). There may be darkness over some part of Scripture, but not over the way of salvation. If you are crying in earnestness, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer which echoes through Scripture is plain, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31).

Oh! accept Christ as your own, and then every act of His grace, as well as every step of your Christian life, will be equally "wonderful,"—your life will be "wonderful." His ways may be "secret" and mysterious, but the result will be "wonderful." The wonders of His love to you will call forth wonders of love in you to Him. While His love will work wonders in you, your love will do wonders for Him. It will make the cross light, self-denial easy, obedience pleasant, life happy; and when at length you are called to His right hand before the Throne of God, and look back on all the steps of the way He has led you, and join in the song, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. i. 5, 6), you will understand better than ever why "His name should be called 'Wonderful'"

LECTURE III.

COUNSELLOR.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

"*Counsellor.*"

THIS title of our Lord Jesus Christ brings Him before us as the grand Depositary of all the wisdom man needs to make him "wise unto salvation," and to carry him safely and happily through life. In courts of law on earthly matters, men have a counsellor to plead their cause because they judge him capable. A counsellor also is one to whom we go for advice in case of difficulty, because we hold his judgment, although fallible, to be superior to our own; and because we suppose his mind, from previous acquaintance will be made up on the subject. The title, "Counsellor" is not, however, to be applied

to our Lord merely in this ordinary sense, for taking "counsel's opinion" as the phrase is, implies deliberation and something of unacquaintance or irresolution previous to that deliberation, and a conclusion afterwards, which had not been come to before. But this is a sense never to be thought of with respect to Christ. He has no need to deliberate as to what He should do: He is never undecided, as men are before they consult. No. He is "great in counsel" and mighty in work. His eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of His doings" (Jer. xxxii. 19). "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding" (Isa. xl. 14). By "Counsellor" in the text, we are to understand One who is Absolute Wisdom, the "wisdom of God;" One "in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and

knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). But Who is so gracious and willing to impart wisdom to those who ask it, that none need go empty away (James i. 5). This is surely a characteristic of our Lord which may well secure our attention. When we think of the perplexities which often harass us—of the indecision of our minds in daily life—of the many points of importance we have to solve, and of the feebleness of our judgment,—we should be thankful for such a Counsellor, who is never weary of being consulted, and never too much occupied with the affairs of others to be unable or unwilling to tell us the truth about our own—who invites us to "pour out our hearts before Him"—to "cast all our care upon Him," and "in everything by prayer and supplication to let our requests be made known unto Him." This, surely, we should regard as an inestimable privilege.

I. The Counsellor.

II. Man's condition under Him.

III. The effect.

I. *The Counsellor.* I do not speak now of Christ's wisdom in creation or government, but in redemption. And on this head I shall not dwell on that part of redemption when the "counsel of peace" was between the Father and the Son, when They formed the stupendous plan of redemption; nor on Christ's execution of it here on earth, in living, dying, and rising again—whereby He not only defeated all the plots and devices of Satan, but opened a way into the kingdom of heaven to all believers. But I would dwell especially on what He is now, as seated at the right hand of God—the Counsellor or Teacher of His people; as One qualified in all points in which they need teaching, and as graciously willing, as He is able, to impart the exact instruction they require. Our common idea of counsellor is one to whom we resort only on great emergencies, and who does not like to be troubled in little matters; but Christ is One to whom we are to go at all times, Who has clients of

all ages and conditions, and Who teaches kindly and patiently the most elementary truths, as well as the deepest mysteries; Who can teach perfectly all who come, and who condescends to babes. For one part of Christ's pre-eminence as Counsellor is, that "God hath given Him the tongue of the learned, that He should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isa. l. 4). Hence He says, "Learn of Me" (Matt. xi. 29). This is the one grand thing to do in life. Oh! if we could say, "This one thing I do," how wise we should be and happy too! Learning not merely of Christ, but "learning Christ" (Eph. iv. 20), knowing more of Him—this is the right preparation for eternity.

For this office of Counsellor or Teacher our Lord is fitted by His two natures. Some of the great men that occupy high places on earth are not specially fitted for the office they hold; but whatever is required of Christ as Mediator is so complete

that nothing can be added or desired. And if you consider the various, distinct, and almost opposite qualities that centre in Him, we must see how fitted He is to be our Counsellor. For example, the union of two natures infinitely distant from each other, God and man—the union of eternity and time, mortality and immortality—when we see also the divided interests He reconciles —who could have carried us to heaven, to the presence of God the Father, but such a Mediator; Who in the dignity of His Godhead could lay His hand on heaven, and by the attributes of humanity could ally Himself to creatures on earth.

Here is a matchless adaptation to His work for the want of which no other high qualifications could have compensated. He Who was the sin-atoning Lamb on earth is our High Priest in heaven. The blood He shed on earth is now with Him in heaven (Heb. ix. 12 and 24), but though a High Priest now in the "Holy of Holies," still "He is a merciful

and faithful High Priest," and "knows how to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 18), having taken part of our nature, He knows how to pity and have compassion upon us. Such is our Counsellor.

II. *Man's condition under such a Counsellor.* It is learning. This life is a school in which God is teaching His Church, and qualifying them for eternity. His Holy Scriptures and dispensations are the books by which they learn. It is a gradual process, but believers are to "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. iv. 15).

Wherever we turn our eyes in God's world we see progressive steps. At creation, from the movement of the Spirit of God on the face of the waters till the work was crowned on the seventh day with the blessing of the Sabbath. In the processes of nature it is the same. First the blade, then the

ear, then the full corn in the ear. The morning light just spread upon the mountains, increasing to the light of perfect day: the spring clothing the earth with buds and flowers going on to the luxuriance of autumn. It is so in man: the babe, the youth, the full-grown man: the dawning perception in the mind, increasing to the full vigour of knowledge. So in the restorative process in the soul by the blessed gospel. There is the imparting the life of Christ which is also light, and the preparation of the soul until it is "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12).

But there is this difference between the process which goes on in the soul, and the other particulars mentioned. This material creation is to pass away, although to be succeeded by "a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). We see the blade coming to perfection, and then decaying—the meridian

splendour of the sun fading into night—the power of manhood succeeded by the grave—the vigour of intellect, by the imbecility of age. But in the soul, the learning process is here but in its infancy, and the necessary instruction in Christ here, is but the prelude to knowing as we are known, and seeing Christ as He is: but to see Christ "as He is," we must be "like Him," and this is produced by learning.

Now we know something of what learning is. It is a process which involves trouble, pains-taking, perseverance, attention. It goes on step by step, as we read (Isa. xxviii. 10), "Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." There is no short cut, it is a plodding process; and just as the frame of a child is strengthened by the exercise of all its limbs, so whatever you know of the gospel you must use and exercise; you must act and do to the extent of your knowledge: "to him that hath shall

be given." And just as the body, without exercise and nourishment, becomes feeble and loses its power, so graces and knowledge never exercised soon languish and die. You don't expect to grow up into Christ while living in worldliness and folly? You don't expect to learn if you never go to your Teacher, never read the Scripture, never think about Christ, nor pray? The husbandman, you would say, is mad, who, while consciously sowing tares, expected a crop of wheat; but, alas! this is the way in which many act. Hundreds *hope* to go to heaven, although they never take any pains to inquire how it can be. They sow the seeds of disregard of God's Word and neglect of prayer, and yet hope to be saved; and they would be angry if told they were in the broad road which leadeth to destruction. But if not in that road, where are they? Not, surely, in the road to heaven? No; "as a man soweth, so also shall he reap." So with Christian principle. Christ deals with us as

reasonable beings, teaching us as we can bear it; and it is our responsibility to learn of such a "Counsellor." Why, even our "Counsellor," in His human nature, "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man;" "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." And this whole life is our time of learning of our "Wonderful" "Counsellor." What advantages and privileges we have in this respect! would that we appreciated them more!

No attribute of Christ shows us more clearly our fallen state; for if not fallen, we should not need a "Counsellor." But when Adam fell, "the understanding became darkened," and the man "alienated from the life of God." There are two great evils to be met and overcome in man: they are ignorance and enmity. But Christ can meet them both. Christ's life imparted is light and knowledge, and Christ's life is love. His life gives light to see His excellency, and the heart is captivated to love such a Saviour,

and the ignorance and enmity are thus both overcome.

Christ is our "Counsellor" by His Word and by the Holy Spirit, and His teaching is carried on in this way in the heart and understanding. The grand agency used is Scripture; and to understand Scripture, we must pray for the Holy Spirit, that He would fulfil His office (John xvi. 13–15). The Holy Spirit fulfils His office as a sovereign in a secret and mysterious way; sometimes falling on the man as gently as the dew lights upon the ground, sometimes with a force which makes the soul tremble. He influences all the faculties—the reason, the understanding, the heart, the affections, the will, the judgment; and whenever these are moved or inclined to the side of God and godliness, instead of to self and worldliness, there is the act of our holy "Counsellor" teaching. Take heed how by neglect and disobedience you grieve Him, and He depart.

Christ's counsel to sinners is to "buy of Him gold that they may be rich" (Rev. iii. 18). His general counsel is set forth in Scripture; but if He sees fit, in His sovereign grace, to teach in any other way, whatever we may think or feel, or believe to be an impression from Him, we must bring "to the law and to the testimony, and if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20). Scripture is the touchstone of all Christ teaches or we learn for our spiritual good. This is especially needful to be remembered in considering such a text as Ps. xvi. 7, "I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night season." "Reins" here are put for the heart, the mind, the affections; these, moved by the Holy Spirit of God, directed him how to please and serve God. But we must be especially careful to test the feelings by Scripture; for they may be merely impressions and fancies of the

imagination, in which there is nothing of the teaching of the "Counsellor" at all.

We hear people say, "I was strongly impressed by a feeling," for which no account can be given: but if it be according to Scripture, we may comfort ourselves it is the blessed influence of our "Counsellor."

Again we hear, "Such a text was strongly impressed upon my mind:" this is a step further. But here, again, we must search and see whether our understanding of the text and the lesson we gather from it be in accordance with the analogy of Scripture, so that our interpretation is the right one.

It is thus the study of Christ's word is so blessed: a patient, prayerful study of it brings such truths to light, and pours such comfort into the soul, as bind the heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The dispensations of God's providence and grace, are also books by which we learn. The reason of God's dealings is not always known: this is one of the "secret things

which belong unto the Lord;" but the lesson to be learned from them is one of "the things which are revealed," and which our "Counsellor" is ever ready to explain to us. The truth sometimes comes out in the reading of Scripture, when applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit; sometimes in meditation on Scripture; sometimes in prayer. Thus when we see we have been wrong and desire to mend and take pains to do so; or when we see we have been right according to Scripture, and desire to be confirmed in the truth, and are strengthened in our maintenance of it; we see and feel the gracious teachings of our "Counsellor."

But it cannot be doubted that, as of old, when the disciples were "brought before kings" it was "given them in that hour what they should speak," so now in the emergencies of life, when there is no time for deliberation, and only a moment to dart up a thought of prayer for help, quick as thought the answer wings its way to the heart of the

believer, and he realises the comfort of a "Counsellor."

III. *The effect.* When a man has real communion with Christ as "Counsellor," and has "learned Christ" as well as of Christ, what power it confers to overcome the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John v. 5)? What weight and influence it gives to the character—what decision and courage, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify, the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24). What high and noble aspirations; the affections set on things above. What ability it gives, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). What strength of purpose, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. i. 12). What purity of

motive—what holiness of heart and life. What dignity of position it confers; the believer is a child of God, an heir of heaven, the friend of Christ, and privileged to walk in fellowship with Him, to come to Him with boldness to tell out all his sorrows, assured of help, to commit all to Him, knowing how wise and good and true and tender a "Counsellor" He is.

Learning of such a Teacher as the Lord Jesus Christ not only makes a man wiser before God, but altogether different in principle and character. As in our own schools, where the teaching is successful, the mind of the teacher is reproduced in the child: so it is in Christ's scholars. Paul says, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16); he exhorts (Phil. ii. 5), "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Peter too (1 Pet. iv. 1), "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." By "mind" in these passages we may under-

stand not only the principles and tastes, but also the thinking and judging powers. Every believer has more or less of the mind of Christ formed in him. He thinks more as Christ does. This is the spirit of "a sound mind" (2 Tim. i. 7). It is not meant that the believer has the same all-seeing mind, the same infallible judgment that Christ has, but as far as his light goes, he sees things as Christ does. For example—

1. *Sin.* He sees this as he once did not; the evil, the danger, the misery of it. The curse it is to a groaning world, the ruin it brings on man, the dishonour it is to God, the destruction it is to all it rests upon.

2. *The Gospel.* This is God's blessed and glorious remedy for sin, and as Christ delighted to do God's will in bringing this saving blessing into the world, so the believer delights to spread it abroad. It has been to his own soul "the power of God," he would therefore send it to others.

3. *The World.* This he sees to be not so

much a particular set of people, or habits, or tastes, or feelings, as a principle which is antagonistic to God: for the same thing is declared of its "friendship" as of the "carnal mind" that it is "enmity against God" (Compare James iv. 4 with Romans viii. 7). It is a principle which hates Christ, and crucified the Lord of Glory, which disputes the longest, the possession of the believer's heart with God; and which is ever trying by its allurements to win away the soul from God. It may be something which is very correct and estimable in the eyes of men, but as it means the glory of self more than the glory of God, it ranks such as prefer it with the "enemies of God."

4. *Eternity.* Christ looked at everything in the light of eternity; things were valuable and important as they bore on eternity. So should we try to look at things, for assuredly they do tell for good or ill on the eternal condition of us all. Oh! how soon this present scene will be changed, and how poor

and valueless will all things appear in which there is no Christ and no eternity. What inexpressible importance therefore attaches to eternity! And if it be true that learning of our "Counsellor" produces an effect on the judgment of believers, so also on their affections.

1. The believer loves God as Christ does. How strikingly was this seen in our Lord when here on earth. How true and good and obedient a Son was He! He delighted in His Father's will, His smile, His purposes, His law. Should not the same be seen in believers?

2. The believer loves the children of God as Christ does. Christ "having loved His own, loved them unto the end," and He says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13); and we read, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John iii. 16). Oh! what a day will that be, when, in the presence of Christ, the believer

will join "the spirits of just men made perfect," and be gathered for ever to those hearts whom he loves in the Lord!

3. The believer has "compassion on the ignorant" as Christ had; Christ was ever going about doing good, "healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, among the people." This is the spring of all missionary work, both at home and abroad: a loving desire to benefit the souls and bodies of men: and the more a man loves Christ, the more interest will he take in every effort that is made, in a scriptural way, to do good to men.

Are you seeking to acquire all these tastes and affections from your heavenly "Counsellor?" We find in common learning, that talking over what we learn is a great help. So do you talk to others of Christ and of what you learn of Him. Think of this under trial, when tempers rise, when men and things are overthwart and contradictory: repeat your lessons learned of Christ, pray

over them, apply them, act them out then and there. Let it be seen that Christ is really your "Counsellor," and that you have not learned of Him in vain, but that you are really the better, more Christ-like in mind, tastes, words, and ways.

LECTURE IV.

THE MIGHTY GOD.

Isaiah ix. 6.

"The mighty God."

He who is here called "The mighty God" is the same as the "Child born," the "Son given." But, though He was veiled in the likeness of sinful flesh, we are not to view Him only as a man. We are to look, through the veil of His flesh, to the might of His Godhead. The attribute of "mighty" is added to the title God, because the thought of His power is able to sustain the Church when in a drooping state, and to prop up her hopes in the midst of all her trials. Thus He speaks of Himself in the 1st chapter of the Revelation,—"I am Alpha and Omega

the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." And this is the same Person who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, who was dead and is now alive. This cannot possibly be meant of the Father, who can never be spoken of as having been dead. It must therefore be meant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now our Lord in the Gospels constantly asserts His equality with the Father. He says, "I and my Father are one." Again, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." "Whatsoever the Father doeth, that also doeth the Son likewise"—meaning with the same will and power; not as two may concur in one action in a different manner, as an agent and an instrument; but as if He would say, "What the Father doeth, that I do, by the same power, with the same ease, in the same perfection, in every respect."

He thus declares Himself "The mighty God."

In previous lectures I have spoken to you of Christ's power in governing all things; of His secret and wonderful working: of His absolute wisdom as Counsellor; and to-day I would direct your attention to His power in redemption, which is more amazing and mighty than His power in creation; for in creation there was no threatening law to be obeyed and silenced, no sin to be pardoned and rooted out; no death on the cross to be suffered; no Satan and death to be overcome, and no hell to be shut up. It would seem to have been an easier thing to make a new world than to have repaired a ruined one, or purified a polluted one; but God has done both, and this especially shows Him to be a "mighty God."

But let us look at a few particulars.

1. Take first *His conception*; "conceived," as we confess, "by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." "The angel said unto

Mary, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Moreover there is in this Redeeming Person a union of two natures infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between Deity and humanity? and yet God and man are one Christ. God, blessed for ever, is joined to a man of sorrows. That which is entirely independent is joined with that which is totally dependent. "The Word was made flesh." Infinite purity was joined to a reputed sinner: all the perfections of the Godhead, and all the imperfections of the manhood, sin only excepted; and yet these two natures of Christ are not mixed, as two liquids may be incorporated when poured into the same vessel. The Divine nature is not turned into the human, nor the human into the Divine. One nature does not swallow up another, and make a third nature distinct

from each. No; I ask you to read carefully the Athanasian Creed, which is a magnificent and unrivalled statement upon this subject. There you will see the Person is not confounded, nor the substance divided, and yet there is such a union that God and man make one Christ. Now what wonderful power there is in all this, that in the same Person there should be a God of glory, and a man despised; that a God on a throne should be an infant in a cradle. These are such expressions and proofs of power as can belong only to a "mighty God."

2. We see His power, again, *in the miracles which He wrought.* Surely it must be a "mighty God" that can give sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; who can raise bodies to life again that were beginning to be putrified. But especially was this power shown in Christ's own resurrection. He says, in the 10th of John, "No man taketh my life from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I

have power to take it again." And you will observe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it was not merely raising a dead body to life, but it was taking off that dead body an infinite weight; it was lifting off the sins of all the redeemed from Him, and casting them into the depths of the sea. It required a mighty God for this, the power of an Almighty arm, and this was an act which specially declared Him to be "The mighty God." We read in the 4th verse of the 1st chapter of the Romans that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Again, in the 6th chapter of that same epistle, we read that "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." Again, in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul prays that the Ephesians might know what was "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He

wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." Therefore we see here especially that His resurrection from the dead declares Him to have been "The mighty God;" "for whatsoever things the Father doeth, those doeth the Son likewise."

3. But His mighty power as God was seen again in *the peculiar doctrine preached to men.* The doctrine of salvation through a crucified Mediator was, even to the Jews, who had God's prophetic statements regarding the character of the Messiah, "a stumbling-block;" but to the Greeks, the philosophers of that day, it was "foolishness." They had multiplied deities of all sorts; but when Paul preached "Jesus and the resurrection," they mocked, so little could they comprehend that which was both "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Besides, this new doctrine struck at the root of all the religions, so called, of the world. Idolatrous customs, worldly wisdom,

must all vanish before it. Christianity admitted no rival; it acknowledged nothing but itself. What happened at Philippi to Paul and Silas? They were brought before the magistrates, and the complaint was that "these men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans." There was a perfect overthrow of everything they were accustomed to. Again, what was the charge of the Thessalonians? "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Again, at Corinth the complaint of the Jews was that "these fellows persuade men to worship God contrary to the law." Now all the ceremonial rites of the Jews "imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. ix. 10), were to be abolished and buried for ever. The Jews were no less devoted to their ceremonial traditions, than the heathen to their vain superstitions, but they were all to be over-

thrown, and what power, I ask, could be equal to this but that of a "mighty God"?

Again, this doctrine was contrary to all the tastes, and enjoyments, and propensities of the flesh. What can give us such a picture of what man is without God as the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? As there was scarcely an error of which their minds were not full, so neither was there a brutish lust of which their heart was not the seat and their body the instrument. But the new doctrine gave their natural desires no quarter, it went dead against the three governing principles of the world—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." It laid the axe to the root of all their ways and indulgences, and brought not merely their imagination but their heart, and their understanding, and their will, to the feet of Jesus Christ. Honours and wealth were to be lightly esteemed in comparison with self-denial and the cross of Christ. All that the world counted noble and high minded was to

be passed by, and meekness, and long-suffering, and patience of injuries, and forgiveness, and all that the world counted craven was to be welcomed instead. Valour and bravery, and soldierly courage, which stand so high with men, were to be exchanged for the far greater valour and courage, of daring to be obedient to Christ, regardless of the taunts of men. The sword for the future was to rust in its scabbard, rather than be unrighteously drawn; conflict was to be exchanged for suffering, and victory for death—rather than the commands of God should be transgressed. Here was a state of things in which self was to be utterly laid down, and Christ alone exalted. I ask again, how could such a doctrine be brought to bear—yea, I may ask, how could such a doctrine be brought to take root in the heart of man, but by the power of a "mighty God?" And whence is it that we see this doctrine, so contrary to the tastes and habits of the world, still triumphing? Triumphing, it is true, in a little flock of

people, but there it is—a real record of the power of God in the midst of a guilty and unrighteous world. We see it planted in the hearts of men here and there, and although they are few, still there they are, and they are living witnesses of the power of this "mighty God." It is this "mighty God" in them; it is this "mighty God" working for them; it is this "mighty God" sustaining the principle of His own everlasting truth in such circumstances as, but for that power, it could never have survived. The truth would have been trodden down in the streets, it would have vanished from off the earth but for the power of the "mighty God," and we never see a man who is a Christian, but we see a living witness of the reality of the power of the "mighty God."

4. Again, if we look *at the instruments employed* we can see the power of "the mighty God" still. They were not noble and dignified heralds, whose position might command attention, but they were lowly

born and meanly bred, with no possessions but their fishing-nets. They were not the learned doctors whom Paul calls "the princes of this world," but they were fishermen chiefly, knowing nothing but their trade; for even after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and when these men, by their preaching, had produced such an effect on the hearts of others that they were brought up before the high priests, and rulers, and leaders of the people, what do we read? "They marvelled that they were such unlearned and ignorant men." But what explained all was this—"they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." They were told before Jesus ascended that they should receive power from on high, and this power which they received was the power of the "mighty God;" yes, the fact of having been with Jesus is that which invests a man with power. The man who lives nearest to Christ is the strongest man in the world. The man who knows most of

the Lord knows most of the secret of real power. It is the power to trust in God; it is the power to anchor the soul on the Lord; feeling we have a rock under our feet, and recognising that the stability of any man is that which he receives from the power of this "mighty God."

5. Again, look at *the means they employed.* It was not such as man would have employed to enforce religion; it was not the force of arms, but it was the power of love. These men went forth with their lives in their hands, dying daily, in order that others might attain eternal life. They did not ask to subdue men to themselves, and so to raise a party; but they desired to bring them to God. We know that there were some in the early Church that did strive to make parties; but Paul rebuked them, saying, "Is Christ divided?" No; the apostles, when they went forth, had a single eye to the Lord Jesus Christ. They desired nothing but that men should be subdued to Him. They did

not try to change the government of the kings under whom they lived, but they tried to secure the hearts of the men among whom they mixed. They appealed not to their understandings only, but also to their consciences. They endeavoured to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; to make each feel that he was responsible; to stir up that inner principle, which is not altogether dead in any man's bosom, and which recognises his accountability to God. To this they appealed. They strove to lift men from the love of the world to the love of Christ; from the love of sin, which was their ruin, to the love of holiness, which was their peace. It was not to make men slaves and captives, but to make them free with the liberty with which the Lord Jesus Christ alone could invest them. In this warfare their weapons were not carnal, but spiritual, and therefore "mighty through God." Their doctrine was summed up in this phrase—"Christ crucified;" and this

was then, as it is now, the "power of God unto salvation" wherever it is received into the heart. They went forth to tell men of "the powers of the world to come;" of One Who loved them, and Who *so* loved them that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for them; Who *so* loved them that He sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. They went forth to tell them that Christ so loved them as to become incarnate for them, to live, to obey, to suffer, to die, to shed His blood for them, and to rise again, and that He is now at the right hand of God, for the purpose of applying the redemption which He wrought out by His death, and of giving "repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins." Again, their doctrine was not preached with learning, or eloquence, or "enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" for when the disciples went forth to preach, "the Lord worked

with them, confirming the word with signs following." Nothing can be more instructive than the sermons of the apostles. How simple and straightforward, how entirely to the mark. Their preaching was a declaration of the life, and death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is those declarations and statements that save men's souls now-a-days. They are not saved by eloquent harangue; they are not saved by metaphysical subtlety; they are not saved by the mere instruction of the mind; but they are saved by the conversion of their hearts; they are saved by having their sympathies and affections drawn out and united to the Lord Jesus Christ; they are saved by their taking Christ for their life and their leader, and the book of God, the old-fashioned book, as their guide and instructor. It is thus that men become wiser than the ancients, and wiser than their teachers, because God's testimonies are their study. May you have grace, dear

brethren, to learn these lessons; that you may be wise with the wisdom which is far beyond anything this world can give, which proves that you have been taught of the "mighty God," in that you give Him that place in your hearts to which He hasa just title.

6. Now all I have said of the means and the instruments may be said of *the way in which salvation is implanted in the heart of man.* All the terms used about salvation, or rather about its influence in the soul of man, argue the mighty power of God. For instance, is salvation expressed by the terms "life," "born again," "a new creature," "a new heart," "a new spirit," "a new man"? all of them are impossible to any other power than the power of a "mighty God." They as much imply the necessity of God's power as the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Now we are taught by Peter that it is "His Divine power which gives us all things

that pertain to life and godliness." It is He who delivers us from the power of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of God's dear Son. What but the power of a "mighty God" can turn men's hearts against all their natural inclinations, and make them love that Saviour against whom the carnal mind is altogether enmity? What but the power of God can turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God? can root out corrupt habits, cast down evil imaginations, subdue self, and direct all to the glory of God against the stream of temptation and interest? Oh, it is only by the working of that mighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

And so, my dear brethren, with regard to the realisation of the *forgiveness of sins.* If you remember, in the 9th of Romans the power of God is made the ground of His patience; or the reason why He is patient is to make His power known. It is the part of magnanimity to pass by injuries, and so

Moses, pleading for the forgiveness of the people in the 14th of Numbers, says, "Now I beseech thee let the power of my Lord be great;" the power of forgiveness, the power of triumphing over anything like retaliation. This is a great power in God. And you all know that it requires great power to manifest this spirit. You know how hard it is to pass over injuries that you sometimes only fancy you receive. You know how hard it is to forgive, and to receive a man who has really injured you. You know how much easier it is to say, "I forgive him, but I will not see him again." That is not God's mode of forgiveness. If God were to say, "I will forgive you, but you shall never come into my presence"—You would think that only half a forgiveness. Therefore, I say, it requires great power to forgive. You will never obtain it and exercise it really unless you receive it from the "mighty God." This was visible in our Lord's case when He healed the man sick of

the palsy, and when He began by the forgiveness of his sins. "When the multitude saw it they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men." It was not merely the power of the miracle that made them marvel, but it was the power of forgiveness. It is a wonderful thing for God to say, "I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more." They shall never operate upon me, and I will never act as if I remembered their sins. You know, and I press it upon you again with all earnestness, how hard this is; you know how hard it is when you are doing kind things to those who have injured you, not to remember what they have done; and very often, although you are able to force yourself into kind acts, it is accompanied by a kind of self-righteous complacency by which you plume yourself upon having done a good thing to one who did an unkind thing to you. How hard it is to make the heart and mind clean, so that when we forgive we do it as God does it,

heartily, remembering their transgressions no more. So in realising the sense of pardon. This as much requires the power of God as the gift of pardon itself. A man is no more able to apply to himself one word of comfort under a sense of sin, than he is able to convert himself. To restore the joy of salvation is, in David's judgment, an act of sovereign grace equal to that of making the clean heart and renewing a right spirit within him. Oh, let us think upon these things. They all bring out the mighty power of God; they all bring before us the wonderful character of that Saviour we have to do with; they bring before us the immensity of our privileges, and while we retain our privileges we live.

So also in *perseverance* in a Christian course. The power of our "mighty God" defeats the malice of Satan, and bruises Satan under our feet. And for this reason it is that we are exhorted to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," and

are told that we shall be "kept by His mighty power through faith unto salvation;" and Paul prays for the Thessalonians (2 Thess. i. 11), that God would count them "worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power." There must be power put forth in our souls, or we shall never make advance in a Christian life. We require the power of this "mighty God" in every act we do, as in every step we set towards the kingdom of heaven. Look where you will, through creation, and you will see proofs of God being a "mighty God." Look also through redemption, and do not natures changed, do not hearts renewed, do not sins forgiven, do not corruptions subdued, does not peace established more or less in every believer's heart, all concur in the great truth that our Saviour is the "mighty God"? Were it not so, you would never see any of the things I have pointed out to you; were it not so you would never know the "blessedness of him

whose unrighteousness is forgiven, whose sin is covered," nor the inexpressible joy of looking to heaven as your home. They all depend on the power of this "mighty God."

Now let me say one word of instruction. 1. *A word of encouragement* to those who are seeking the Lord. Christ is that "horn of salvation" of whom Zacharias speaks (Luke i. 69), filled to all fulness with blessing. There cannot be one more mighty than our Saviour, nor could help for sinners have been laid upon one more mighty and willing to save the neediest. Why then need you doubt that He is able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him? His promises must be fulfilled to all who trust them, since nothing can resist Him. He has power to fulfil His word, because He is almighty, and He Who has power to fulfil His word, is the same Who has faithfulness to maintain that word, Who has tenderness and wisdom to adapt that word, and Who knows exactly how to

speak that word to every one who hears, whatever may be their circumstances and condition. And He, my dear brethren, Who as Mediator, has expiated sin, and vanquished all the powers of hell, is well able to cleanse and perfect that Church for which He shed His blood. I say therefore to you who are seeking Him, cast yourselves, with all your sins and corruptions, with all your hindrances and temptations, on the power of a "mighty God," and remember that there is nothing too hard for the Lord.

2. Then there is *a word of warning.* "The mighty God!" What a thought for the careless! The wicked must all bend or break under His mighty power. Men may break His laws and slight His word, but they cannot resist His power any more than they can escape His vigilance. Go where they will, He sees them. A prisoner in this world may make his escape, but a prisoner in the world to come—never! It is written, —"There is none that can deliver out of

Thy hand" (Job x. 7). Therefore *now* is the only opportunity given to you to think upon the power of this "mighty God," to make your peace with Him, ye who are careless and live in neglect of His word. Now is your day of grace; take heed lest ye trifle it away, and lest the light which now shines go out in darkness!

There are two attributes of God which should especially make the wicked tremble: His wrath and His power; and mark the connexion in which these stand in the 22d verse of the 9th of Romans: "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Now, if it were mere wrath, and no power, it would not be so very terrible; but you observe wrath and power are joined. There is not only a sharp sword, but a powerful arm; and I would have you think how great must be that wrath which is backed by all the power of Omnipotence;

when there will be wrath and no compassion, when all God's power will be put forth in punishing, and none in pitying. How irresistible will be the power of such a "mighty God," and what reason have the careless to consider their relation to this "mighty God."

3. Then there is a *word of comfort* for believers. What joy can be so great as yours, to know that you are folded in the arms of this "mighty God"? No hand can pluck you out of them. It is a mercy inexpressible, that you have a true, a wise, and a loving God; but all were in vain were He not also a "mighty God." What a comfort to read, "Power belongeth unto God." It can never be better placed. It is power in the hands of a loving Father—your Father. It is a just power, for we read "His right hand is full of righteousness" (Ps. xlviii. 10). Because He is righteous He can never use His power ill, because He is wise He can never use it unseasonably, but, it will always be put forth at the right time

in the right circumstances, in the right place, and in the right measure and manner for you. Our evils and trials, temptations and sorrows, can never be beyond His reach; the lusts within, no less than the troubles without, are all within His power to overrule and destroy; so that, let sins be never so great, let corruption be never so strong, there is power in the blood of Christ; for He Who has purchased the Church with His own blood, is no other than "the mighty God."

LECTURE V.

THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

"The everlasting Father."

THE meaning of this title of our Lord Jesus Christ is not at first sight quite obvious. It is true He is God, One with the Father, for He says, "I and my Father are One." "From everlasting to everlasting He is God;" and His Fatherly care of His people, and tenderness towards them are everlasting. But this is scarcely the sense of the text. The words of the text are not to be understood absolutely of the First Person in the blessed and glorious Trinity, but of the Second; and as the "all power" which was given to Christ "in heaven and

in earth" was a delegated power to Him as Mediator, so His everlasting Fatherhood bears reference more to the Church than to the world at large, although at the same time it does not cease to be true that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

The words "everlasting Father" in the text are rendered in the Septuagint, "The Father of the world to come," or, "of the everlasting age," and Bishop Lowth, in his Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, says the Hebrew will admit of this rendering, and he concludes that it is from the authority of this text that the kingdom of the Messiah in the New Testament is called "the world to come" (Matt xii. 32, and Heb. ii. 5, and vi. 5). Christ is thus the Father of the gospel state, which is put in subjection to Him, and not unto the angels.

Now this is the sense—Christ as the Father of the gospel state or the everlasting

age—in which I shall understand the text. He was, from eternity, the Father of the great work of redemption, it was the product of His wisdom as "Counsellor," of His power as "the mighty God," of His love as "the everlasting Father."

The Jewish dispensation was intended but for a limited time; but the Christian dispensation is never to be succeeded by another. Hence this dispensation is called "the last times," and may be considered as "the everlasting age," for it is to have no end. Of this Christ is the Author. It owes its existence to Him as its Parent. It is preserved by His guardian care. The whole family in heaven and earth, which participate its blessings, both bear His image and inherit His glory. We have thus to consider the relation in which Christ stands to His Church. He is the everlasting Father of the gospel state.

1. *The Church owes its existence to Christ.* In the text we are to understand

our Lord Jesus Christ as the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven;" "the everlasting Father" of the whole Church, which derives its spiritual being and life from Him, just as the whole race of men derive their existence from the first Adam. He is thus "the Author of eternal salvation" to them, and so is the Father of a blessed eternity to them. It is true, all believers are said to be "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world," but it is the Second Adam which is "a quickening Spirit" (John v. 21). They are "His seed" (Isa. liii. 10). Believers are "begotten again with the word of truth," and thus are born again and quickened unto life. The word of Christ, ministered by the Spirit of Christ, effects this great change in men; and thus He is the Father of all believers, who are said to be His children (Heb. ii. 13). It is true, God gives them all to Him; just as we read of children born in a natural way, "Children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward." So

these spiritual children are the Father's gift to the Son, who by His Spirit quickens them to everlasting life, or they would be dead children. You remember what our Lord says in the 17th of John in this respect, in the 2d verse: "Thou hast given Him" (the Son) "power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." And again, in the 6th verse of the same chapter, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Thus we see He is their everlasting Father. This I judge to be the real sense in which we are to understand the words of the text. Believers not only derive their life from Christ, but their real spiritual life is Christ's life in them. They are in possession of everlasting life; for as Christ "dieth no more," so His life in believers dieth no more. He is the Father of everlasting life in them. It is thus the gospel is called "the words of this life,"—it

is intended to give life; or it is called, "the gospel of Christ," Who is Life. And the preaching of the Word is called the "preaching of Christ;" and the ministers of the gospel are "ministers of Christ." Men taught by the Word of God are said to be taught by Christ (Eph. iv. 20, 21). Christ is the subject matter as well as the Author of the gospel; and so in the dispensation of the gospel, Christ is the sermon, Christ is the preacher, Christ is the power which gives blessing to all. For instance, He is the sermon, Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified;" "not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." That *ought* to be the subject of every sermon, and that *is* the subject of every sermon that does good. Nothing else helps the souls of men, nothing else really quickens them into life; nothing delivers them from the power of sin, nothing invests them with real everlasting life, but as Christ is the sermon. Again, He is the preacher. The apostle says, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." "God hath

in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. xii. 25, and i. 2). And be assured, my dear brethren, that if in the preaching of the gospel you do not hear the voice of Christ, you will never receive any good. If you are merely taken with the eloquence of the preacher, or the elegance of manner, or the pleasantness of style, you will get no good by it. But if, in the word that he speaks, you are listening to the voice of Christ, then there is a power quickening your soul that can turn you "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and can give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified through faith that is in Christ;" but in no other way. Therefore we see, not only is Christ the sermon you are to listen to, but He is the Preacher also. He, again, is the very power by which all good is done. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live;" and

none do live spiritually but those that hear the voice of the Son of God. It is a very important thing for you to bear in mind, that the object of listening to preaching is not merely that your minds may be instructed, but that your hearts my be converted, and your souls may be saved. It is not enough that you should know the way of life, but you should take away with you the power of life. It is not enough that you are able to say, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," but you should be able to say, "That blood has cleansed me from all sin." It is not enough that you know that the Lord Jesus Christ loved sinners, and laid down His life for them; but the testimony that you ought to be able to give is that which Paul mentions in Galatians ii.; "Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Thus we see all is Christ's, and no man is quickened unto life but by Christ; and he who dies despising Christ will not rise to everlasting life, but to shame and everlasting

contempt. We see that all believers owe their spiritual existence to Christ as "the everlasting Father."

But as the Church owes her existence to Christ as the everlasting Father, so

2. *She owes all her privileges to Him.* What is His language to His children? "Son, all that I have is thine." And what a blessed thing it is that, Christ gives Himself; and as Paul says in the 8th of Romans,—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Yes, my brethren, the "all things" that you and I need will follow freely upon our acceptance of the grand gift of the Father. If we have received the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts by faith, we may be perfectly at ease with regard to all other things; they shall be given to us freely. Christ is the depositary with Whom God has intrusted all things necessary for the salvation of the soul. There is not a single thing good for your bodies or

for your souls, or necessary for time or for eternity, but is treasured up for you in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be given out freely, according to your needs. And then again, with regard to spiritual blessings, He confers the very highest privileges possible. There stands in the very fore-front of all these privileges forgiveness of all your sins. You remember, perhaps, how the Psalmist puts this in the 103d Psalm, when he is calling upon all the powers that he possesses to bless the Lord, he says, "Forget not all His benefits;" and then the very first benefit that he mentions is, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." And pardon of sin, my dear brethren, is the very first gift that Christ bestows on those that receive Him by faith; and then from forgiveness of sins there will come peace with God, and every blessing of sanctification, in order to make you meet to partake "the inheritance of the saints in light."

Now this "everlasting Father" calls believers His sons by adoption. They are sons

of God by adoption. This indeed is one object of the gospel. Look at that passage in the 4th of the Galatians, the 4th and following verses:—"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." There's the relationship, you see; there's the fatherhood of Christ acknowledged by the children; they cry "Abba, Father;" they have received the "adoption of sons." Now you observe, that the sending Christ is not to make them sons of God; this they were as "chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world." But the sending Christ is to develop, and to manifest, who are sons. And this development is made in the preaching of the gospel. It is in this way, as a general rule—there may be exceptions of course, because the Lord is

free, and He operates according to no fixed rule; but, generally speaking, it may be said that this development is made in the preaching of the gospel. Those that receive Christ show themselves to be sons; they show that they have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; they show that Christ is their everlasting Father. They love to give testimony before all the world, "Jesus is our everlasting Father;" and the Spirit of the Son is shed abroad in their hearts, and so it is that they take their place as sons of God, and claim the privileges of the sons of God. And how great that privilege is, who shall say? Why, the apostle John, in the 3d chapter of his First Epistle says, with admiration, "Behold," let me call your attention to it; it is a most uncommon thing:—"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And be assured, my dear brethren, God makes no mistake in the appellation which

He gives to His children. Those whom He calls sons, are sons; they are sons whom He has always known as sons; they are sons whom He now manifests before the world as such; sons of whom Jesus is the "everlasting Father." Now it is, as I have said, a most exalted privilege, because these sons of God are "kings," they are "priests unto God;" they are "a royal priesthood," they are "a holy nation," they are "a peculiar people." And just as nothing is such an honour to any country as to be the seat of the gospel of Christ, so it is an honour to be a citizen of such a country. And if it be an honour to any country, that the Bible has "free course" from one end of it to the other, so is it an honour to be influenced and altogether guided by that Bible. And as it was an honour to the Jews that "to them were committed the oracles of God," so it is the very highest honour to have the seat of the gospel in one's heart, to have Christ dwelling in that heart by faith, and thus exercising

all the prerogatives of an "everlasting Father," and all the authority of a parent over an obedient child, as well as conferring at the same time all the privileges of a son, enabling the believer to enjoy communion with God, to live in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, to enjoy grace and gifts, and all the power with which He enables His children to contend with sin, and the flesh, and the world. But this is not all. As a parent, our "everlasting Father" not merely bestows all privileges on His Church, but

3. *He also appoints His various children to their several offices.* He sends some children forth to preach the gospel; some He calls upon in their quiet position to defend the truth by writing, or by any other mode in which He may see that they are useful. Some work with their tongues; some with their hands. Some do His work by lying upon a bed of sickness; some by the activities of service in daily life. Some He

calls to minister in very humble offices; but He calls upon all of them to pray, and to practise, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. There is not one of you, my dear brethren, who is a manifested child of God, and capable of claiming the fatherhood, the spiritual fatherhood, of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not appointed to some especial office. You may make no noise in the world, but you have a great work to do. There is a circle by which you are surrounded, and upon that you are to operate; whether it be as a mother in the nursery, or whether it be as a father instructing his children; whether it be as a man of business diffusing around the savour of the Lord Jesus Christ, and showing before the world how men can do all things in a Christian spirit—that is to say, how they can transact business with all the correctness and precision of a worldly man, and at the same time with all the simplicity and consistency of a Christian man. Some people perhaps may

say that I am speaking of what I am very little acquainted with,—perhaps it may be so;—but I know, from the Word of God, that no man is at liberty to be anything but a Christian; I know from the Word of God that there is nothing but Christianity for a Christian; and I know that no man can be in a safe position who once takes up the idea, even in thought, that it is permitted to him as a man of business to depart from the strict integrity which ought to mark him as a son of God, claiming Christ as his "everlasting Father." Very probably, indeed, the devil does get in the small end of the wedge in that particular; but it is one of the most fatal things possible; and the day cannot be far off, if a man still yield to that tempting voice, in which the wedge will be driven home, and all his profession of Christianity be split up into fragments, and the man be left exposed before the world as a hollow-hearted professor. I entreat you, therefore, never to think that, whatever be your posi-

tion, if you claim the fatherhood of Christ, you are exempted from the obedience of a son.

And to every one He has given, moreover, his talent. As in the coronation of an earthly king every peer of the realm has his station about the throne, and feels it henceforth his duty, by all means, to uphold the honour and stability of the throne; so every Christian has committed to his care the throne and the crown of his Saviour; and the honour, and the peace, and the stability of his Father's kingdom, are in his measure, in his charge.

Let me ask you, my dear brethren, how you are recognising this responsibility. It is a solemn one; it meets you at every turn of life. There is not one single act or movement in your whole history which exempts you from the recognition of this responsibility. If you claim the everlasting fatherhood of Christ, then He claims of you loyalty and obedience to His service. He calls upon

you to be true wherever you are, and howsoever placed. He calls upon you not to postpone His dignity, His honour, His throne, His crown, to any consideration of the earth; but you are to maintain Him in that position which He claims as His right—not merely as your King, but in the tender and pure relation of your "everlasting Father."

4. *The support and preservation of the Church are derived from Him.* The Church of Christ, though "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," is yet in itself a feeble, helpless body, not able to stand or live without Christ; just as our body cannot stand the moment the life is fled.

Now the gospel, when planted in the heart by the Holy Spirit, is an abiding power, "an incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever;" and as Christ, as an "everlasting Father," preserves His children blameless unto His coming and kingdom, so He will not suffer any member of His Church to be shaken or overturned by all the powers of

darkness. He has strength to repel, and wisdom to answer, all the temptations and assaults of the enemy. If the world should come against the Church, with temptations on the right hand, and on the left, with disgrace, with persecution, and sorrow, then will our "everlasting Father" supply His suffering Church with sure promises on which they may depend, and with "sure mercies" with which they shall be strengthened and upheld; so that the Church may say in all discouragements, "I know Whom I have believed; I know He has overcome the world; I know He is the Master of Satan; I am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day; and although I suffer, yet, like Paul, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. The very reproaches of Christ are sweeter to me than the pleasures of sin. The daily cross, so long as I can maintain a heart sprinkled with Christ's precious blood, the daily persecutions and afflictions for the gospel's sake, are

far before all the pleasures of the world, accompanied by a sense of guilt."

Now this is the blessedness our "everlasting Father" gives; that by His Word, and by His Spirit, He not only does sanctify and purify believers, but keeps them close to Himself. But for His Word, and Holy Spirit, no doubt every little thing would turn them away from Christ. How easily would afflictions make us mistrust God's love, and so change our love to Him, and make us murmur and fret under His hand. And you know, my dear brethren, how hard it is at times to recognise the hand of a loving Father in the dispensations with which He tries you. When He touches you in the tenderest part; when He makes demands upon your submission; when He wrenches your affections from some object around which they have been twined for years, you are inclined to say: "Is this love?" "Is this the love of a tender, considerate Father?" You find that to be a hard lesson, but still it does not cease

to be true that God is Love; it does not cease to be true that that principle guides and governs all Christ's dispensations; it does not cease to be true that you could not have learned the lesson that He would teach you in any other way but by that strong wrench. Every lesson He teaches us is sure to be for our good, and it will come out at the last when the veil is lifted, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, that the arm that has guided us has not merely been the arm of a powerful Father, but that of a tender and most loving one also. It is our Father's training and our Father's discipline by which He perfects His graces in the Church; just as the pruning of trees and harrowing of land makes them more productive. Observe what the Psalmist says in the 119th Psalm:—"Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." If he had not believed and loved what the Word of God says,—namely, that God means benefit and blessing

by His chastening, he would have perished; he would have risen from his affliction worse than he was before. Thus then our "everlasting Father" by His Word sustains the Church in trial. Why is it that Christ's sheep will not hear or follow the voice of strangers—that is to say, will not yield to temptations that would draw them from Him? Why, because they hear and know the voice of Christ in the Word, and feel the Spirit in their own hearts setting His seal and bearing witness to the truth of it. Look at the case of the Ephesian elders. You remember the very touching address that Paul gave to them when he sent for them to come down to meet him at Miletus, when he was about to separate from them? he said that after his departing "grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock" (Acts xx. 29). And what was the remedy? "Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inherit-

ance among all them which are sanctified through faith that is in Christ;" teaching us this great truth, that it is the Word of God, the Word of His grace, that keeps men from being carried away with perverse disputings. And your lot and mine, brethren, are cast in a day when we should recognise the importance of this. What are all heresies, ancient as well as modern? Departures from the written Word. How is it that men go wrong? Because they depart from the simplicity of the written Word. And how is it that men are kept right? Because they adhere stedfastly to the simplicity of the written Word. They do not mind the jeers of philosophy; they do not mind being called antiquated by those who profess to follow some new light; they are not ashamed of old-fashioned truth; they are not ashamed of old-fashioned doctrine; but they know that as with God nothing is old, so with God nothing is new. And by careful prayerful study they find in the old truth new

lights; they find in the old truth fresh power; they find in the truth that has become familiar, a sweetness, and a suitability, and an adaptation to their daily wants which in vain they look for from any other source. Oh! woe to us, my dear brethren, when we can think coldly of such a familiar text as that, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Woe to us when you and I forget that we are sinners needing to be cleansed day by day, and hour by hour; and woe to us when we shall cease to feel that our position—let that of others be whatever it may—that my position certainly is upon the very brink of that fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; that I must ever live near that fountain; that I may ever have the enjoyment of its power, that I may know that victory that overcometh the world, and which arises from my trust in that God by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. It is thus by close adherence to the Word

that men are preserved. My brethren, if "the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" it will make you steadfast; the Word of your "everlasting Father" will be your strength and your stay. But remember, it is not merely looking into Scripture as a man looks into a glass, and goeth away and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was; but it is *continuing* therein; patiently, day by day, plodding on, and picking up a little here and a little there—line upon line, precept upon precept—this is the way for a man to be "a doer of the Word," and also to be "blessed in his deed."

And it is in this way too that a likeness is established between the Church and "its everlasting Father." All believers are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God;" but it is not until real sonship exists that this likeness begins. Then it is that the features of the Father's character begin to be developed in the child; old things pass away, all things become new.

Then there is the dawning and growth of the same mind, the same judgment, the same will, the same affection, the same desires, the same disposition—these are all by the Holy Spirit, wrought in measure in the child, as they shine in perfection in the Father. We read, "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure," and he becomes, or strives to become, patient as He is patient, holy, as He is holy, "harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Hence, as the "everlasting Father" was loving, was tender, was compassionate, was ever able and willing to see the best in everybody; not picking out the bad points and fastening upon them, but seeing that which is to be encouraged, and ever speaking a kind and tender word to help on those that are halting along the road; ever ready to bind up the broken heart; ever ready to cheer those that are cast down; ever ready to wipe away the tear of sorrow, and to speak the kind and encouraging word;—So, brethren, what might

life be to us if we knew more of this likeness to our "everlasting Father;" if we could be to each other more what Christ has been to us—tender, long-suffering, encouraging in all things? May we have grace to prize Him more; to cultivate these features of his character, and to remember that they are things which we shall not have to lay down when we pass away from this life, but these will be some of the blessed graces which are to shine perfectly throughout eternity. Yes, we may say that as the privilege of a believer is to be here in this world as Christ is in that world now (1 John iv. 17), so is the responsibility also his, to "walk even as Christ also walked." Believers are "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" they hold fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. And if they are children they should show all the affection and the tastes of children—the meekness, the simplicity, the docility. A healthy condition will always be expressed by "desiring the

sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby;" that they may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Not merely growing in the acquisition of new truth, but growing in a deepening and expanding acquaintance with old-fashioned truth; that they may see more of Christ in the Word, that they may feel more of the power of Christ in their own hearts and consciences, and so be more and more conformed to the image of their "everlasting Father," growing up in all things into Him all the days of their life, until at last they come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

I would ask you, my brethren, can you see any of these marks in your own souls? Can you see one? Can you say honestly to God, "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest, O Lord, I desire to be Thy child, and I mourn that I so far fall short of what I know I ought to be"? Can you say, "I do put all my trust and confidence in Thy blood and

righteousness, and cast away utterly all other hope, and look to Thee alone for all my salvation"? Can you say this? Does God see that you can say it honestly? Then I say, be of good cheer, it is the Lord's doing, and you may be confident of this—"He that hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Be of good cheer, my dear brethren; this groaning, suffering life is not all, thanks be to God; but our "everlasting Father" has something else in store; He has a home, and He means to fill that home with all His children.

5. *He has prepared an inheritance for all His children.* He sets us in this particular an example of what He teaches us in the 12th chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, that "the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." And this Christ has done. He says in the 14th of John, "I go to prepare a place for you," and "He has entered

into heaven with His own blood," that the heavenly things should be thus purified, as we are taught in that wonderful passage in the 9th of Hebrews. And the welcome to the saints at the last day is this,—"Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And what does he say in Revelation iii. 21? "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Here then is the blessed prospect; here is that which ought to cheer and encourage us in all the trials of this suffering, groaning life; here is the blessed consummation set before every one of you who are really trusting in the Lord, although your faith be but as a grain of mustard seed, nothing less than everlasting blessedness in an everlasting kingdom with "the everlasting Father" of an everlasting age.

LECTURE VI.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

ISAIAH ix. 6.

"*The Prince of Peace.*"

IN considering this title of our Lord Jesus Christ, I shall present Him to you as the Author of our reconciliation to God. The gospel is not merely the declaration of God's willingness to take men into His favour, but it also sets forth the terms on which He will receive them—His counsels and plans. It tells us what God has done, and also what He will enable man to do; and all the blessedness of reconciliation both on the part of man and God, not only circles round, but centres in, the Lord Jesus Christ as "the

Prince of Peace." Christ has done all that is needed in both cases, and on the ground of Christ's finished work men are besought to be reconciled to God. God calls them in the gospel to be reconciled, and as soon as a man hears God's call and believes in this finished work of Christ and accepts it, he is reconciled, and received into God's favour. His sins are no longer imputed to him, he is accepted in Christ, for "God hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

By reconciliation is meant the whole work of redemption. The Word of God has various terms for our recovery by Christ, which all amount to the same thing. For instance, it is called "reconciliation," as it respects us as enemies; it is called "salvation," as it respects us as lost; it is called "propitiation," as it respects us as guilty; and it is called "redemption," as it respects us as captives.

The idea this morning is that of "reconcili-

ation," by which enemies are made friends, and peace is obtained. Of this peace Christ is the grand Author, and so is called the Prince of Peace.

The way in which I shall present the subject to you is this :—

I. He creates Peace.
II. He gives Peace.
III. He preserves Peace.
IV. He increases Peace.

I. *He creates Peace.* This is by His *death.* There could be no peace between God and man but by the blood of Christ. We are distinctly told in the Epistle to the Colossians (i. 20), "He hath made peace through the blood of His cross." We read, it is true, in the 5th chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, at the 18th verse, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." The holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity are all concerned in reconciliation. Each Person has a

distinct part in it. The glory of contriving it is ascribed to the Father; of effecting it, to the Son; of applying it to men's hearts and consciences, to the Holy Ghost. But if God be in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, we must have to do with Christ in order that we may be reconciled. There is no having anything to do with the Father but by Christ. He is the only way. There is no Mediator, no Reconciler, but Christ. It is Christ, and none but Christ,—Christ exclusively. Christ is the only Person designed in the prophecies, in the promises, in the types. For this end He was set up from everlasting; for this end He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. No other has been set up since; God has accepted no other; none will be hereafter. He is the same for ever, the same to-day as He was before, and will be for ever. The heart of God is fixed on Him. "He hath gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are

in earth;" only in Him. We are taught, again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He will speak by no other, He will save by no other. How Christ hath reconciled us to God is, as I have said, by His *death*. This is the only way in which He created peace, and there never was any peace between God and man since Adam's fall, but in this way. Christ, by His death, saves us from the wrath of God; as we read in the 5th of Romans, "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." No other sacrifice was ever appointed by God, or substituted in the room of sinners. None else ever had the title of Peacemaker conferred on him, as we find Christ had by His death upon the Cross.

You see, then, my dear brethren, how very important a thing it is to recognise the death

of Christ. And one reason why I insist upon this so particularly, is that you may be well armed against those who would cast discredit upon the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this only way that Christ creates peace. It is in this only way that you and I can ever taste or enjoy peace.

Again, with regard to this work by which He creates peace, none was ever fitted to do it but the Lord Jesus Christ. It pleased God that His honour should be satisfied; His law vindicated; His justice glorified; His holiness displayed; and none but Christ was ever able to do all this.

There must be security that the honour of God should not again be tarnished. This could not be insured by a mutable creature, and so Christ, an Infinite Mediator, undertook it. Without infinite satisfaction guilt must remain; without infinite power to preserve that satisfaction entire, guilt would return. This Mediator therefore was allied to both parties; to God, so that He could

call Him Father, to man, so that He could call him brother; that God and man might be joined in one covenant of grace, the Mediator of that covenant is God and man in one Christ. No other surety was ever accepted by God for the payment of our debts. No other sacrifices could "make the comers thereunto perfect." These sacrifices were an image, not the life; God accepted them as shadows, but not as the substance. The fact of their repetition was a sure proof of their inability to effect the reconciliation of man (Heb. x. 3). The high priest stood offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which could never take away sin; but our Mediator, having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. x. 11, 12). The priests *stood* ministering in proof that their work was never complete; ours *sat down* in token that His work was done. Yes! my dear brethren, Jesus Christ alone "bare our griefs and carried our sorrows:" "in one

body He reconciled us to God," says Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians (ii. 16), and that body Peter tells us was "His own body," "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). "He trod the winepress alone: of the people there was none with Him." None other has the title of "Prince of Peace;" to none other did God give children for a seed to quicken, preserve, and present, at the last day. Whenever a sheep of His fold strays, it is Christ, "the Prince of Peace," that brings that stray sheep back to the Father. Our constant access to the Father is by Christ. And, if you remember, there is a very remarkable testimony to the importance of the grace of Christ, as "the Prince of Peace," in the benediction which Paul puts before us in the Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xiii. 14). "The grace of Christ" is put in order, by Paul, before "the love of God," and "the communion of the Holy Ghost" in that benediction. He says, "The grace of the Lord

Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." And why was this? Because the grace of Christ is the only bond that knits us to God; and the only foundation of every expression of love from the Father, as well as of every act of communion with the Holy Ghost. And thus it is that He creates peace.

My dear brethren, may you all have power to enter experimentally into this peace; not merely to know that it exists, but through the influence of the Holy Ghost to realise it in your own souls.

And this leads me, in the next place, to consider that

II. *Christ gives Peace.* As the creation of peace was by His *death*, the gift of peace is by His *life*. Yes, it is by believing in the Son of God, dead, and risen again, and by receiving a living Christ into our hearts by faith, that we find peace. We are told in the 2d chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians,

and 14th verse, that "He is our peace," and He is our peace by the application of His blood to the conscience, and in no other way can we be reconciled to God and the conscience be at peace.

The same blood which was sprinkled on the mercy-seat is sprinkled on the conscience of the believer; and as that blood procured peace in heaven, so will it procure peace in the soul. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. x. 22). An evil conscience is an accusing conscience; but when sprinkled with blood it is an acquitting conscience; not, indeed, that it will acquit us from the facts of sin—they will remain; but it will acquit us from the guilt of sin. The memory of the facts of sin will often arise to humble us in the dust, and make us mourn that we have so dishonoured God; but they need not destroy our peace, because all is forgiven and dealt with by God as if forgotten. For we are told, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;"

they shall no more be mentioned against them. But our memory of sin remains, that we may go softly and watchfully all our days, and learn to deal tenderly and patiently with an erring brother.

Take heed I would say to you, my bretheren, of a dull conscience. Whatever satisfies God may well satisfy conscience; but nothing will satisfy a scripturally enlightened and informed conscience but that which satisfies God, and that is Christ's blood only. The foundation of peace of conscience is peace with God, which is through faith in Christ, and this may be when there is little or no comfort. There may be peace with God when there is nothing that can be called joy. There may be no storms in the soul and yet no sunshine. The day may be clouded though the winds be still. But it is well to note that as "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," men must be in Christ by faith to claim reconciliation to God. Till a man really believes in

Christ he has no peace with God ; "the wrath of God abideth on him" we are told (John iii. 36), though peace is declared to him in the preaching of the gospel. Were it not so there would be no need for ministers to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Men get no benefit from the gospel unless they believe it. Nor can men, though they are "chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world," be said to be reconciled from the foundation of the world. Paul puts an end to such an idea in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and 21st verse, where he says, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet *now* hath He reconciled,"—"now," not before. If it had been from the foundation of the world the Colossians had never been enemies to God. We must bear in mind the distinction between God's choice of His people and their actual reconciliation to Him. Reconciliation, it is true, as it was in the decrees of God, is from eternity ;

its purchase was at Christ's death; but its actual application to the soul of man is when by faith he takes Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Then he is reconciled to God; because with a hearty sincere faith he pleads the death of Christ, which is an atonement of God's appointment.

We must distinguish between reconciliation designed by God, and reconciliation purchased and obtained by Christ, and reconciliation declared in the gospel, and reconciliation received in the soul. It was designed from eternity; it was purchased at Christ's death; it is declared when a man hears the gospel; it is received when he believes in Jesus Christ.

Now the peace which springs from reconciliation to God, Christ gives. It is Christ's peace, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." It is the peace which Christ had when He arose from the dead, having "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." It was a peace arising from sin

being done with and destroyed as regards its condemning power; from the fact that He had finished the work which the Father had given Him to do; from the consciousness that, sin being put away, God was His Father, heaven was His home, eternal rest was His portion for ever;—that there was to be no more suffering, that He was to be no more "a man of sorrows," but a Prince of Peace for ever upon His throne. Now this peace differs from all other kinds of peace. It is called "the peace of God." And, as I have said, Christ gives this peace "not as the world giveth;" He gives in a superior way; something worth having, and given in a better way. In the midst of what the world gives (and Christ does not say it has nothing to give), and which is often felt to be very pleasant; we are told that Christ has something better to give, for which we ought to turn away from worldly gifts. This, my brethren, is a difficult lesson; how few have faith to do it.

When worldliness looks pleasant, and when there appears to be so little harm in it, then to remember, "not as the world giveth, give I unto you;" then to turn away from what looks so harmless, but which we know is worldly, to that which involves a cross, and self-denial—here comes in the difficult lesson,—"Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." How many are there, my brethren, who turn away from Christ's promise to the husks of the world. How few are there like Moses, who "when he was come to age refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." I think we all know enough, whether we really believe it or not, to be sure that the best the world has to give only produces unrest; it has nothing to satisfy the wants of the soul. Whereas Christ gives peace—deep, lasting, abiding peace; real rest, rest of conscience, rest of heart, through His own blood; the

past all pardoned, the present and the future all undertaken for and secured in Jesus Christ. This is what a man really wants to make him happy; this is what a man really wants who would enjoy peace. It is quite true this peace may not come in the form of rest at first; sometimes it comes in the shape of deep trial, deep anguish of soul; but if it be Christ's work it ends in rest and peace; because He gives Himself, and that includes all that a man can need, everything that is capable of satisfying the man, in whatever aspect you look at him, body, soul, or spirit.

And then as to the way in which Christ gives; "not as the world." Christ gives, for instance, *freely*. It is really a gift pure and unselfish. But how seldom is it that in men's gifts there is not some expectation direct or indirect of return. And what is the price which men pay for the world's gifts? For the pleasures of a moment?

They pay constantly, I may say always, the price of remorse, sometimes of disease, sometimes of death; nay, is it not a fact of daily occurrence, that for a little money, perhaps for some worldly honour, some sensual gratification, a man gives his soul? But when Christ gives His peace what does He ask? Why, simply that you should let "it rule in your hearts" and be at rest, and enjoy it for ever and ever. "Not as the world giveth."

Again, Christ gives *untiringly*. How soon the world gets tired of giving. "I have given you so much and so often, I really cannot give you any more; besides, you have made such a bad use of what I have given you," whereas Christ "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." The oftener we come, the better and the more welcome we are. And what can exceed the grandeur of that declaration which we have (Rom. v. 20), "Where sin abounded grace

did much more abound." Let us come as sinners to be filled with His grace; let us come empty to go rich and full away.

Again Christ gives *suitably*. Men's gifts often lack fitness, or at any rate we think they do. "He might have given me something else, or something which I wanted more, or more of what he has given me,—something better." But what Christ gives is exactly the thing both in quantity and quality; and it comes, my dear brethren, prepared expressly for you; suited by One who knows you thoroughly, and who "careth for you;" who is ever thinking of you, who is always considering your wants, who is always looking to the use you make of what He gives; and who, therefore, knowing you thoroughly, and having all things at His command, gives the very exact thing that you require. There is difficulty in learning this lesson. We are so apt to judge by sight and not by faith; and to judge partially; to think this good and that bad,—forgetting the

holy combination, the "working together" of the joy and the sorrow, the bitter and the sweet that constitutes that spiritual medicine by which we are made wiser and happier.

Once more—Christ gives *for ever*. What the world gives it often takes away; but not so Christ. His "gifts," like His "calling, are without repentance;" without any change of mind on the part of Him who gives, just as in the first instance they are bestowed without any change of mind on the part of him who receives. He anticipates all. Now what He gives, He gives for ever. But the world's gifts, how uncertain are they! We have them to-day, they are gone to-morrow. What a change, for instance, does sickness or the loss of money make in the condition of the happiest "man of the world!" What resting-place has he, poor man, when his health or his money is gone? But let the Christian be so tried, he still has Christ for ever, and Christ is his all. So much, then, for the peace Christ gives; very different

from any other kind of peace, my brethren, in its quality and in its character, and very differently given from the mode in which the world giveth. Be ye advised by the Spirit of the Lord; seek gifts from Christ. Turn away from all things in the world which are at variance with His mind and will, and try to live in the sweet enjoyment of the peace which Christ gives. The next point is that

III. *Christ preserves Peace.* As He creates peace by His *death*, as He gives peace by His *life*, so He preserves peace by His *intercession*. He is an Advocate, ever pleading the merits of His blood, and by the power of this blood peace is preserved, and in no other way. If your peace be shaken, if it be for the time destroyed, you will never recover it, but as you come again to the blood of the Lord Jesus. What was His first word when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, when they were assembled with closed doors for fear of the

Jews? Jesus came amongst them and said, "Peace be unto you." He would never have said this had it not been obtained, and were it not to be preserved. He would never have put before them, if I may so speak, such a tantalising statement if they were not to be privileged to have the enjoyment of it. Just as He would not have been called "our Peace" if He had not secured it by His death and resurrection; still less would He have been called "the Prince of Peace." No, my brethren, peace is a "grace wherein we stand by faith;" as we are taught in the 5th of Romans, it is not a tottering, but a stable grace. His own grace and good will bestows it; and the same grace and immutable will will preserve it. What do we read in the 54th of Isaiah and 10th verse? that a merciful God will not suffer the covenant of His peace to be removed. No, the Father Who made this covenant with Christ will always have respect unto it. He will no more condemn a believing soul when he

looks on Christ, than He will drown the world when He looks on the rainbow. It is at variance with His truth, and how blessed is the instruction which is given us in the Word, where we are told that His throne is encompassed with the rainbow ; the emblem of perpetual peace. It was so encircled in Ezekiel's time, as we read in the first chapter of his prophecies. So he appeared to John ages after, as we read in the 4th of Revelation, and the predominant colour we are told was "green like that of an emerald," to show that His grace is always green and fresh now as it was then, and that all the consolation which any man has ever drawn at any time from dwelling scripturally on God's covenant, the emblem of which is the rainbow, will still come fresh to us if we are brought to receive Jesus Christ as "the Prince of Peace." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," God is in Christ *as Priest*, maintaining that reconciliation. The intercession of Christ is a

part of His priestly office, to preserve His people's peace, and Christ's priesthood is confirmed by an oath, "The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever" (Ps. cx. 4). So long, therefore, as Christ remains what He is, our ever living, unchangeable High Priest, our peace will stand firm, Christ has been accepted, He will not now be rejected. He has entered into the presence of God for us, and thus He will remain till His enemies be made His footstool, and when He comes forth to crush them it will also be "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Thus it is, my brethren, in looking to the Lord Jesus as our "Advocate with the Father, as well as our propitiation for sin," that peace is preserved in the soul of man. Never think it possible that you can recover peace in your own hearts apart from the Lord Jesus. There cannot be a greater libel upon the worth of His blood; there cannot be a greater or more fatal self-deception:

"a deceived heart hath turned him aside." And if you think that you possess peace apart from the intercession and propitiation of Christ, you are perishing with a lie in your right hand.

Now turn we in conclusion to the practice. What I have spoken hitherto has been in connexion chiefly with doctrine—the work of Christ especially for you; how He has created peace for you, how He gives peace to you, and how He preserves peace for you. Now we have to consider how

IV. *He increases Peace in you.* How is it? By conforming you to Himself, and for this end making you workers together with Him. I do no dishonour to the Lord Jesus, I only obey the statements of His Word, when I say that it is just in proportion as you hearken to His commandments that your peace will flow as a river. Here comes in your responsibility. I say that it is just in proportion to your obedience to His com-

mandments that your "peace" will flow "as a river," widening and deepening as it flows on and on to the ocean. Your "righteousness," too, will be "like waves of the sea,"—that is, all the acts of life will be successive waves of holiness. But it will not be less Christ in you. Your position as Christians will still be, "It is not I, but Christ liveth in me." Only there must be the assent of your will and your affections; there must be the drawing forth of your sympathies towards holiness, and the conformity of your will to His; there must be self-discipline in order that you may show you are desirous of being led by the Lord, and that you acknowledge there is no peace to be found but in His paths and ways. This is what is meant in the 3d of the Proverbs,—"Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

This is the exercise of Christ's kingly power in the heart, by which He subdues all things to Himself; by which He "casts down

imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." This is the way in which He enables you to "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" to "mortify the deeds of the body;" to deny self, to carry your cross, and to give up your will to His. This, my brethren, is the difficult lesson of life, but it is one to be learnt of Christ, and for this very purpose He says, "Learn of me." He is not only our lesson-book, but our Teacher too, and He teaches both by precept and example; and He has never set us one lesson, either of being, or doing, or suffering, but He will confer power to learn it. Knowing this, we must be prepared to suffer. Suffering is perhaps the greatest part of real service, and by far the most profitable part; that by which the greatest conformity to Christ is attained. People have learnt better lessons upon a bed of sickness than ever they have in the activities of life.

They have learnt more submission to the will of God when they have been laid by, than ever they have in health; because very frequently in the latter case the zeal of the flesh is mixed with the wisdom of the Spirit. But when a man is laid low; when he not only feels weak, but knows that he is weak; when he not only feels that he is nothing, but that Christ must be all,—then it is he casts himself upon the Lord; then it is he realises, "Christ must be my Saviour in all respects; I can do nothing to save myself, I must submit to be saved wholly by the Lord." That is one of the most blessed conditions of soul that a man ever can attain to in this life. It has been well said, my dear brethren, "Active service is what we do for God, passive service is what God does for us;" and how far better is His acting than ours!

And very blessed too are the effects of this peace, for we read in the 4th of Philippians, "The peace of God, which passeth

all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It is a remarkable expression, because the word "keep" means to keep possession as one does of a garrison or fort. Now this peace acts as a kind of warlike defence; it keeps the heart and mind close to Christ. It shuts up the man, so to speak, to the Lord Jesus, and so keeps all enemies out. Just in proportion as that peace garrisons the heart will the man be watchful, and prayerful; will he walk accurately, looking all around to see the advance of enemies. He will be like that general of whom it is related, that he never went through a country without his attention being directed to see how it could be held against an enemy if he ever happened to be in command there. Oh how wise if you and I could ever bear about with us this spirit: that when we went here and there we said to ourselves, "What stratagems of the enemy am I likely to be exposed to? How am I endeavouring to be upon my

guard? How am I watching to keep all my senses, that they may not be inlets of temptation? How am I trying by the power of faith to resist the great enemy that is ever seeking to devour?" Let then, my dear brethren, "the peace of God rule in your hearts." That is the secret. It will keep you, keep both your heart and your mind. For sometimes when Satan cannot get into the heart, then he tries to get into the mind. If he cannot upset a man's love for the Lord Jesus he will sometimes try to inject doubts about the promises and faithfulness of God. But there is the sure remedy—"The peace of God shall keep both your heart and mind."

I say, then, let this "peace rule in your hearts." It is your privilege. Yield yourselves to "the Prince of Peace." His will, His words, His ways, His sympathies, all tend to peace. Let others take anything else for their refuge; be your's under the wings of "the Prince of Peace." And hear

what He says for your encouragement in the 27th of Isaiah—"Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Observe the direction—"Take hold of My strength;" observe the end—"That he may make peace with Me;" observe the encouraging assurance—"He *shall* make peace with Me." Again, think of what is said in the Book of Job—"Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace" (Job xxii. 21). Oh, if we were more acquainted with Christ, with His character, His love, His tenderness, His readiness to help, and His power to meet every want in the soul, how close we should keep to Him. And what greater encouragement can you have, my dear brethren, than these promises of the Word? There is no room in what I have quoted to you for any hard thoughts; all is mercy, all is love, all is peace. Again, when we turn to the 85th Psalm—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He

will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints."

Give up, then, I say, the ways of the world, and take service under the banner of "the Prince of Peace." The banner He carries is love, and every command and dispensation in His service is sure to issue in the same. He died to give you peace, and if you "let the peace of God rule in your hearts," it will keep you from the world and its ways. To what heights of service should the believer rise who has such a Prince; not a haughty, hard, imperious Prince, but a lowly, meek, and loving One; not one who delights in war but in peace.

And as He loves you, so love one another, Be at peace among yourselves. Imitate the saints above. If they can say, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever," so should we. We owe him as much. He has done as much for our salvation as for theirs. It is true

their conflict is over and ours remains; yet He will keep us as He kept them "by His mighty power through faith unto salvation." And oh! how glorious will His whole work appear when we see Him in heaven; when all His manifold wisdom is displayed by the Church of God; when all His pains and care for every one of you, for all His dear children, are seen in the various ways in which every one of them has been led through the wilderness; the teaching which was necessary for each; all so exact, all so entirely the very thing they needed—oh, wonderful will it be! Surely such a prospect of blessedness and peace, and rest, should animate us to serve Him by living in peace, as it becometh the servants of "the Prince of Peace."

"The Shepherd and His Flock."

LECTURES

PREACHED IN PORTMAN CHAPEL,

DURING LENT 1867.

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LECTURE I.

"JEHOVAH'S SHEPHERD THE ONE SHEPHERD."

EZEKIEL xxxiv. 23.

"And I will set up One shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd."

THESE words, you will observe, are a strong contrast to the character of those wicked shepherds spoken of in the previous part of the chapter, who fed themselves, and not the flock, who ate the fat, and clothed themselves with the wool, but fed not the flock; who took no pains to strengthen the diseased, nor to heal the sick, nor to bind up the broken, nor to bring again that which was driven away, nor to seek that which was lost; so that they were scattered as

sheep having no shepherd. But as distinguished from all this, God says, "I will set up One shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd."

This is evidently a prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of that good time yet to come, when all Christ's people shall be gathered to Himself, and of which He speaks in the 10th of John, where He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold (flock) and one shepherd." We have a similar statement, too, in the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians—"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him:" by which we may understand that God purposes to gather together into one kingdom,

or family, or flock, in His beloved Son, and under His government, all things in heaven and earth ; so that not only Jews and Gentiles would become one Church, and saints in heaven and saints on earth would be one body, but even holy angels and redeemed sinners would make up one great association, under this one Head, Jesus Christ. And this is apparently the sense of the text, taken with that passage in John which I have just quoted—that there should be one Shepherd over all God's people, and thus there should be one flock and one Shepherd.

The term "Shepherd," or "Pastor," is one applied in the Word of God not only to Jehovah Himself, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to ministers of the gospel (Jer. iii. 15, and Eph. iv. 11) ; but also to civil and political rulers (Jer. xii. 10, and xxv. 34). But in the text we can have no doubt who is meant by the Shepherd,—even the same that is called in the 13th of Zechariah, "My shepherd, the man that is

My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts," even the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can we doubt who are meant by the flock, called in the verse previous to the text, "My flock." And then in the 31st verse you will read, "Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men." These are they that hear Christ's voice, and follow Him ; those who are children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.

I purpose this Lent, my dear brethren, God willing, to lay before you the relation of the Shepherd to His sheep, and the work which He has done, and is doing for them now. This morning the subject will be "Jehovah's Shepherd, the one Shepherd." The next lecture will be "The Good Shepherd," laying down His life for the sheep. The next to that, "The Great Shepherd," rising again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. The next, The "Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," searching for His sheep, and bringing them home on His shoulders rejoicing. Then, "The Shep-

herd's care of His sheep when found, and the discipline necessary to fit them for what He has prepared for them." And then the last will be, "The Chief Shepherd," appearing again to take His flock to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also.

In the words of the text, the "One Shepherd" is called David, because He was descended from that King of Israel according to the flesh, and typified by him, and because He was a ruler and teacher of His people after God's own heart. The word "David" signifies "Beloved," and Christ is the well beloved of His Father, in Whom He is well pleased. The Saviour is elsewhere styled David, as being the Person in Whom all the promises made to David are fulfilled. The expression may also allude to David's first employment, which was that of a shepherd. He is also, you see, in the verse next to the text, called "a Prince among them;" being "Head over all things to His Church;" He still being among His people in the character

of a loving Shepherd, in the character of a tender, feeling Brother, no less than in that of an everlasting God, equally able to help and to save in danger as He is to sympathise in sorrow and suffering.

Now the word in the text is remarkable: —"*One* shepherd;" One, either in opposition to the multitude that had gone before, who wronged the flock, and whom our Lord called "thieves and robbers," or One, that is, the only Shepherd, unto whom none is comparable, the only Shepherd that gave out the living food of saving truth; that really shepherded and folded the sheep, and was in every respect suited to their needs. But although One, He is the universal Shepherd of His flock. As the cattle on a thousand hills are His, so are the flocks in a thousand countries. We find, for instance, in the word of God not merely the churches in Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria (Acts ix. 31), that is, the Jewish churches, but the churches of the Gentiles, are all called the churches of

Christ (Rom. xvi. 4 and 16). They all had their particular pastors. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, Peter of the Jews, but Christ was the Apostle and Shepherd of both, therefore He says, "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold," not of the Jewish fold, "them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." And again, it is He who enables all other shepherds to discharge the trust committed unto them. He furnishes them with their gifts and graces, "one after this manner, and another after that," so that without Christ they can do nothing. How often do we see this. What fine gifts of utterance and eloquence do we see in some ministers, but how little conversion of sinners seems to follow all they say. While other ministers of far meaner gifts, as they appear to us, so speak under the power of the Holy Ghost that the people fall before them, and many are saved. Now this teaches us the important lesson, my dear brethren, that while we are listening to the

preached Word, our dependence should be upon the Shepherd, our hearts should rely upon Him who alone can bless His own Word, and send it home in saving power to our souls. For it is not the eloquence of the minister that does the work, but the Spirit of the living God; nor is it man's thoughts about what God says, however good these may be, and however true, which do God's work, but it is God's own Word, "the sword of the Spirit," which breaks the hard heart, and brings sinners under the power of the truth.

Now He is the "One Shepherd" also, and the only One who ever had the gathering and the keeping of the flock. He did not intrude Himself into this office; He was chosen, and called, and appointed, and sent of God for this end, and duly qualified for it. The sheep are all His by creation, and by the gift of the Father; and they are His by election—"chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." And in the daily gather-

ing of the people to the knowledge of Himself, it is true now, as our Lord said to His apostles in early days, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." They are His by purchase; His by redemption, for He bought them with His own blood; and the saving them all with an everlasting salvation is "the travail of His soul" now. He is daily adding to the Church such as should be saved; and to see it complete, and all His people gathered, will be His everlasting satisfaction. For this end, He is working all things after the counsel of His own will. And nothing, my dear brethren, can give us a grander idea of the value of the flock, or of one single soul in that flock, or of the glory of the result when that flock is gathered, than to consider that all the events of earth—national, political, domestic—are being carried on and over-ruled for this end —that the Shepherd may gather and save

His flock; and that all things in heaven and earth, which had been broken and scattered by the Fall, might be gathered again in one, in Christ. What glory will then accrue to the Shepherd! What honour and blessing to the flock! Oh! we have no idea of the grandeur of such an event as the conversion of one soul. How often we hear of it without much concern—perhaps with an expression of thankfulness! but we seldom consider what is really involved in such an event. There are other things, which are perfectly insignificant by comparison, which attract our attention far more. For instance, now, we deem the Paris Exhibition* a wonderful event, and no doubt it will be—intended, as it is, to eclipse anything of the sort that has ever been before. It is difficult to conceive any earthly sight grander than the accumulated products of the skill and industry of the greatest nations of the earth brought together to one spot, accompanied too, as they will

* This took place in the spring and summer of 1867.

doubtless be, by the inhabitants of distant countries, with all their variety of feature and costume. Beyond all doubt it will be surprisingly magnificent. But I question, my brethren, if, considered in itself, it will cause "joy in the presence of the angels of God." Whereas a soul quickened with the life of the Lord Jesus, let this event take place wherever it may—even in that saddest of all human habitations, a London back-kitchen—is an event that makes heaven ring with songs of praise. Yes; where the Word of God gets hold of a sinner's heart—where that sinner is withdrawn from his allegiance to the devil, and that allegiance is transferred to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is an event the full grandeur of which we shall never be able to understand until we join that song of the redeemed, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

The term "feed," in our text, sets forth the whole office of the Shepherd; which may be briefly stated to be the "strengthening the

diseased, or the weak, the healing the sick, the binding up the broken, the bringing again that which was driven away, and the seeking that which was lost, and reigning and ruling gently" (ver. 4). There is scarcely any term used in Scripture of our Lord Jesus Christ more comforting than that of "Shepherd." He is "the Good Shepherd," remember. Now we never hear of a good shepherd ill-treating the flock, or neglecting them; but doing the best for them; not always, indeed, according to the poor judgment of the flock, but according to the perfect knowledge of the "Good Shepherd;" providing them suitable pasture, and protecting them from all harm and danger. What consolation may we derive from the character of our Shepherd in this respect. All that the tenderest and most loving heart, guided by perfect wisdom, and backed by an omnipotent arm, can do, we may be sure of. He is not like an "hireling whose own the sheep are not," and who "careth not" for them; no, He is

sure to feed them with food convenient for them. And what help we ought to derive from this, in the midst of the varied dispensations by which "the Good Shepherd" is fitting us for His presence. It makes all the difference if we can trust in Him as our "Good Shepherd." Then we may rest in peace, convinced that the best is being done, the best that is possible for us; the best in the judgment of God, the best in the judgment of Him Who died for us, the best in His judgment Who is travailing now that His flock may be gathered, and Who is ordering all things for the very purpose that He may be satisfied eventually. Oh! my brethren, if when we are tried we could fall back upon this great truth—it is the Shepherd that is acting, He who knows best and does best; if we could always interpret all His dispensations by what He represents Himself to be in His Word in character and heart, we might often have songs of rejoicing when otherwise we go mourning heavily.

The dangers to which the sheep are exposed are many, and especially in the present day. In all ages of the world the wolf has been trying to ravage the flock. When our Lord sent forth His apostles, His words were, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. x. 16). When St Paul was bidding good-bye to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he told them, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts xx. 29). So it is now. Heresy and false teaching are what Christ's sheep have ever been exposed to, and never perhaps more than in our own day; when, on the one hand, there is a latitudinarianism which mutilates and casts contempt on many parts of the Word of God; and, on the other hand, there is a superstition which would foist into the worship of God the observance of forms and ceremonies which His Word does not warrant. Now in the safe middle way between these two extremes I believe the

"Good Shepherd" will lead all who simply trust in Him and in the teachings of His Word. But, I entreat each of you, my brethren, not to think because you are neither a Rationalist nor a Ritualist, that therefore you are safe. Remember the way of life is narrow and straight. The line of Scripture truth and Christian principle is straight and unbending. It is difficult to keep, not difficult to miss. And therefore let your dependence be on Christ to keep you. Let your heart rest upon the love of that "Watchman of Israel who never slumbereth nor sleepeth," but ever has His eye upon His sheep for good. He tells you the way is narrow, and so you find it. He calls His a *little flock;* but though they be few, and feeble too, He tells them not to fear, for it is their "Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom."

Should we not all pray and labour to be among this little flock? The fact of its being a little flock should make us doubly anxious;

for the smaller it is, the less likely it is for any given person to belong to it. When we think, my dear brethren, it is the majority who are wrong, it makes the matter very serious. When you think of the world at large, how many millions have never heard the name of Christ; and of the millions who have heard that name, how many reject it;—and amongst professed Christians, how few there are that really bring forth fruits, and thus testify by their works that their faith is living, and real and saving; it is very solemn. How few are there that really hear His voice in their hearts, and follow Him in their lives. But this is what He says all His sheep do, "and a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers."

Let me apply the subject to you. Our Lord says one proof of being His sheep is that they hear His voice. Now where is this voice expressed? It is expressed in His Word. His sheep, then, obey that

Word; they love that Word; they read that Word; nay, they study their Bible, and are careful to walk obediently to it, to make it a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. They are careful to test what they hear taught by His unerring truth, and to remember that it is "to the law and to the testimony" they must come, and if what they hear speaks not according to that Word, it is because "there is no light in it." Now, dear brethren, are any of these simple statements true of you? Do you really study your Bibles to see what Christ teaches, in order that you may do it? He says, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it;" and "if ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them." Do you strive to get that happiness which arises from simple obedience to the Word of the Lord, remembering Who has spoken it, and remembering that it is "the Word that shall judge you at the last day?"

But, in addition to the outward mark of

obedience, which will be visible to all, Christ's sheep have inward marks, which He alone can discern, but which are infallible in their character.

First, then, all Christ's manifested sheep have the mark within of His indwelling Spirit. It is by Him they are quickened unto life; by Him they have a "new heart and a new spirit" given to them; by Him they become "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Now this mark lies deep within; but Christ can see whether it is there or not. This is the seal of the Holy Spirit, which Christ gives to all that believe, and accept Him as their Saviour. With His infinite power He puts forth His hand, and silently changes the hearts of all His sheep when the day of their conversion comes. Sometimes the change is so gradual that it is almost "without observation;" sometimes it is so sudden that it is evident to all. But when Christ puts forth His power, it is real, and men are saved by it. My brethren, can you

turn to the Word of God, and prove your sonship of God by the fact that you are "led by the Holy Spirit of God?" Is there within you a responsive chord to all the motions of the Holy Spirit of God? Is there within you a spirit of obedience to the written Word of God; because the Spirit never teaches otherwise than in strict accordance with what is written. He does not write one thing in Scripture, and teach you in your heart another—no; He is consistent, consistently true to everything that is written in the book of God. And you may test, therefore, your inward affections by reading quietly and patiently the written Word. And I would only say upon this subject, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Whatever else he may have, whatever else he may seem, whatever else he may be able to do in the way of self-denial; whatever evidence he may be able to give outwardly that he is walking according to the Word of God; yet the fact

remains, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." It is one mark, therefore, of being among Christ's sheep that there is the indwelling Spirit of God.

2. There is another mark visible to Christ's eye only. All His manifested sheep have been washed clean from the guilt of all sin. Every sheep of Christ's flock was once a child of wrath, even as others; but "they have been washed, they have been sanctified, they have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." They have been sprinkled with Christ's blood; and although this is visible only to Christ's searching eye, yet that is enough; for it is written, if you remember, "When *I* see the blood, I will pass over" (Ezek. xii. 13). There may be many amongst Christ's flock that may be treated with scorn, as if they had not been sprinkled. There may be many true sheep that are very inconsistent, and therefore others may judge unfavourably of them. But if the Lord sees the blood,

condemnation is done with. I do not mean by this that we are to be satisfied with inconsistencies—I do not mean that we should be content not to walk visibly and outwardly as it becometh the gospel; but, as I would not make the heart of one sad which God doth not make sad, I say that where there is real dependence upon the blood of Christ, although accompanied by a thousand inconsistencies, yet if those inconsistencies are mourned over and confessed before God, if the blood be sprinkled again and again; if there is a soul living, so to speak, upon the very brink of the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,—be comforted, dear brethren; the Lord sees it, and He says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Yes; the saving, cleansing power of His precious blood, received by faith, is as *real* upon the hearts of His children here as it is in heaven. We know that the joy and song of heaven is, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood;"

and we know that they are arrayed in white robes, and stand with palms in their hands before the throne. And how came they to stand there? Because "they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" "therefore," we read, "are they before the throne." No one will enter heaven of whom this is not true. Therefore ask yourselves, What think ye of Christ's blood? Do you ever think of pardon apart from it? Do you ever think of entering heaven without that blood which must be sprinkled upon you, and which Christ has taken into heaven with Him? Oh, my dear brethren, let your dependence be upon that precious blood. Be assured that there is no way of escape apart from it; and although men say terrible things of the atonement of the Lord Jesus, yet may it ever be your comfort, and stay, and support, so that you can say with all heartiness, as Paul did, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Pray for

these marks of Christ's true sheep—a new heart by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and pardon through His blood.

3. There is but one more mark that I would mention, and that is, that Christians will love one another. John says, "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" love them as brethren, and as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the grand peculiarity. There are very many sheep, true sheep of Christ's flock, who have ways that are not very lovable, but yet are real members, and they are loved, therefore, because they belong to the Lord Jesus. They have a great many qualities which are not acceptable, rather repelling than attracting; but yet the fact that they belong to the Lord Jesus covers all. That is the veil of love which hides all defects, and belonging to Him, they are welcomed. And these sheep love each other's company. Now we never see a sheep preferring the company of

a wolf, or of a dog; but always that of the flock, and especially this is said to be the case when a storm is coming. Then you will see the sheep gradually drawing together. Oh, how instructive is this in the times in which you and I live. When we look into the Church of England, or indeed at the Christianity of England, does there not seem to be a storm brewing, in which the true flock of Christ will be severely tried? And are not we coming, dear brethren, into the days in which the test of brotherhood will be, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity"? Are not sifting times at hand, in which every man's faith will be tried, of what sort it is? And, indeed, the day is already come, in which no mere denominational Christianity will be enough, but men must be "rooted and grounded" and "settled in Christ," or they will not be able to stand. They must be able to realise the presence and the power of the Spirit, and the blood of Christ, and then,

where these are, they are the bonds of union and brotherhood. These are members of Christ's flock, owning the same "One Shepherd," possessing the same spirit, enjoying the same peace, sprinkled with the same blood, loving the same Bible, guided by the same eye, and looking forward to the same everlasting life, and singing together the same song:—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and glory, and blessing." And be assured, my dear brethren, that if we cannot welcome a man who "loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," we need instruction. It does not follow that we are not to have our own views of Church government, and of other things which are merely external. But if I love my Lord, I ought to love those whom my Lord loves; and if I see a brother whom my Lord deems fit to sit with Him at His right hand, surely he is fit to sit with me. If he is to sit with Christ in heaven, he may well sit by my side upon earth. And the very fact that I

accept him for Christ's sake, will make me loving and forbearing to him. He may hold many things that I do not hold; and he has as much right to his private judgment in external things, upon which the Word of God has not pronounced with certainty, as I have to mine. But yet I am to look upon him as a brother; and if he be a brother of the Elder Brother he must be a brother of all those who are brethren of the Lord Jesus. May we have grace, without sinking anything that we deem essential, to be large-hearted and loving unto all. May we strive to see the points in which we do agree, rather than ever be upon the watch to find out those which are the reverse. May we ever strive to take the best view. Our Lord always did this. He saw the best in everybody. May we have grace to do the same. And where we see the scriptural evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit of God; where we see the power of that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin within, and

the endeavour to make the life holy without; then may we be able to say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Thus shall we be able to look with a loving heart to the "One Shepherd," that has loved us. He will make His flock "of one heart, and one mind" in Himself. And although, as I have said, we may not see eye to eye here in outward things; yet in things which concern our everlasting peace, in things which affect our love to the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be able to exemplify the statement made in the text, "I will set up One Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd."

LECTURE II.

"THE GOOD SHEPHERD."

JOHN X. 11.

"I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

THE vicarious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is the very key-stone of Christianity. Take that away, and all collapses. Men are left in a hopeless condition. Conscious of being sinners, but with no possible means of expiation, their case is most awful. They cannot come near to a holy God, Who is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity; and God having revealed no other way of access but "the new and living way" of Christ's blood, take that away, I say, and all is gone.

Men must live in their sins, and die in their sins. Sin must cleave to them for ever, and all the misery it has occasioned in them and to them must be perpetuated, for neither time nor death can destroy sin. But, "thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift," the gospel reveals something very different. It declares to us the doctrine of substitution, of "the Just dying for the unjust," of "Christ dying for the ungodly." Yea, it goes farther, for it tells of God having "made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now this is the full truth of the words of the text:—"The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." Here the Lord Jesus Christ, under the name of "the Good Shepherd," is said to give His life for—that is, instead of—the sheep. And this is not all; for in addition to taking their place, and being "made a curse" for them, He procures for them inestimable blessings.

I need not, this morning, speak of "the Good Shepherd." He is Jehovah's Shepherd, the "One Shepherd," whom God designed, from eternity, to set up to gather the sheep together. He is the same I spoke of last week. But let us inquire into these two points:—

I. *What He did by dying.*

II. *Why He did it.*

I. *What He did by dying.* The text tells us, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life." Here we have the voluntariness of Christ's death. He says Himself, a few verses beyond the text, "I lay down My life. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." Now there was perfect harmony between the will of God, the Father, and God the Son, in the work of redemption. It is true God "gave" His Son; but it is

equally true Christ "gave" Himself. There was a joint consent. As He tells us (John v. 19), "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Christ giving Himself implies the Father's giving Him, and *vice versâ*. We have it again (Gal. i. 4), "Who gave Himself for our sins." Think of this, my dear brethren—"gave Himself;" —not gold, not silver, not worlds; but what is infinitely more precious—Himself, His soul, no less than His body, "an offering for sin" (Isa. liii. 10.)

The foundation of all this is love—eternal, infinite love; love that passeth all understanding. We have it (Ephes. v. 2), "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." He gave Himself in our stead, an offering to be consumed, a sacrifice to die. His whole life on earth was an offering to God. His death was the sac-

rifice. And as He was the Son of God, His sacrifice was infinite, and therefore sufficient—"sufficient" for the sins of all the world.

As I have said, His work was the result of His love. It is so understood in heaven. You know what is said (Rev. i. 5, 6), "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." First, He loved them, then He shed His blood for them, then He washed them in it, and then He made them kings and priests. And it was this love which made Him say, "I delight to do Thy will; yea, Thy law is within My heart." We know that love makes any work delightful. And when we read, as we do (Ps. xix. 5), of the "Sun as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," so certainly we may feel the Sun of Righteousness, the Heavenly Bridegroom, delighted to

run His humble yet glorious race in saving His bride, the Church. I entreat you, my brethren, in thinking of the atonement of the Lord Jesus, never to lose sight of the voluntariness of His death. Although poor here, He was not *made* poor; He *became* poor; He laid aside His riches for our sakes, that we through His poverty might be rich. Again, He was not emptied of His glory by another, but He emptied Himself, or, as we have it translated, "made Himself of no reputation." He was not *forced* to become a servant, but He *took* upon Him the form of a servant. He could have resisted those who apprehended and crucified Him, as He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" But instead of this He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And why? Because He came as His Father's servant, to do not His own, but His Father's will.

But you may say, It would be more instructive, instead of speaking generally, to tell us some particulars which are involved in Christ's giving His life. Then, I would say—

1. *Christ's blood was shed to save life and deliver from danger.* Now this was typified by the blood of the passover. We read (Exod. xii. 13), "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." The lives of men are forfeited by sin, and they are in danger of perishing for ever under the just wrath of Almighty God. What is said of our Lord Jesus Christ with reference to this wrath in 1 Thess. i. 10? speaking of Jesus' death, Paul says, "Which delivered us from the wrath to come." Yes, my brethren, as surely as night follows day, as surely as winter follows summer, so surely shall wrath follow upon sin. "The wrath to

come;" this is a strong expression, and signifies not only coming wrath, but the perpetuity of that wrath; wrath still to come; wrath ever coming, however long it may have come. This is confirmed by what is declared in John iii. 36, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God *abideth* on him." So long as unbelief remains in any heart, so long must the wrath of God abide upon that soul; and if it be not removed by faith in Jesus Christ *here, it can never be removed,* for we are told "there is no work nor device"—that is to say, there is no doing anything—"in the grave, whither we are all hastening." If not done now, it can never be done, it is *now or never.*

Now from this deserved wrath, from this condemnation, Jesus delivered, by His death, all who shall believe in Him. He laid down His life for this very end, and this was the great price paid for our redemption from the wrath of God. It is an atonement so

complete, that God saves those who trust in Christ. And being their Elder Brother, and having the right of redemption, and being possessed of unsearchable riches, as "Heir of all things," He undertook it freely from His own love, and successfully carried it out; so that "to them that are in Christ Jesus there is now no condemnation;" they are "delivered from the wrath to come;" "saved from wrath through Him." And so it comes to pass with believing sinners now, as it was said of old, "When I see the blood I will pass over." And let me beg you to bear in mind, my dear brethren, that this is God's statement of the only possible way of being saved from the wrath to come. Another point is—

2. *Christ's blood was shed to make atonement.* This was typified (Lev. iv. 20), "And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be for-

given them." As blood was shed to deliver from danger, so also was it shed to make an atonement; by which we understand that those for whom the blood was shed should be reconciled to God by the atonement made, and receive remission of sins. This is the language of the gospel, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And on this ground Christ's death is called "the propitiation for our sins." Now reconciliation is the bringing together those whom sin had separated, and the way is by the death of Christ, by which perfect satisfaction has been made to God for our sins, and by which alone we draw nigh to God. We are "made nigh" by the blood of Christ—in no other way. Sin also made a breach between God and angels; but this breach is not healed. "Christ took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," of men; and while no terms are revealed to reconcile God and fallen angels, Christ—the man Christ Jesus

—is declared to be the "One Mediator between God and men." And He is so by having by His death made satisfaction to the justice of God for man's sins. Now by His death all Christ's people are *virtually* reconciled to God; by the *application* of His death by faith they are *actually* reconciled. Although it be true that men are reconciled in the purpose of God from all eternity through the death of Jesus, we must remember that no man really enters into the privilege of reconciliation until he lays hold of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. And then by Christ's intercession (He having entered into heaven for us with His own blood), believers are maintained in their state of reconciliation. Still, you see, dependent upon the same blood. As we are taught in the 5th of Romans, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"—that is to say, our salvation shall be sustained by His life at

the right hand of the throne of God. I entreat you, my brethren, never to forget that all depends upon the text, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." If there had been no death of Christ there would have been no reconciliation. If there had been no blood shed, you could never have drawn nigh to call God your Father. If there were no blood prevalent in Christ's priesthood, which is an ever-living, unchangeable priesthood at this moment, at the right hand of the throne of God, you could never realise you are saved persons, nor look forward with confidence to the glory which Christ has purchased for His people.

There is still another thing:—

3. *Christ's blood was shed to cleanse from sin.* This was typified by the cleansing of the leper. (Lev. xiv. 4–7), "Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop; and the priest shall command that one of the

birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water; as for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field." Now what do we read in Gal. i. 4? We read of Christ, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world;" that we might walk in the liberty of the children of God, that we might be free with the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free; that with the same freedom with which the living bird flies over the open fields, all the children of God may live in the enjoyment of spiritual freedom, as those for whom there is no condemnation, to whom God has given all things richly to enjoy, feeling that God is their Father,

that "all things" are their portion here, and that heaven is their everlasting home hereafter.

Now we must bear in mind, my dear brethren, that in all believers there is a twofold evil in sin, there is first the *guilt of it*, and there is secondly the *pollution of it*. Both are met in Christ's blood. The first, the guilt, is met by justification; the second, the pollution, by sanctification. Both are received by faith. Sanctification may be said to be the preparation of the justified for glory. Now we owe the sanctifying Spirit to the death of Christ, for it was after Christ had died and risen again, and ascended, that He sent forth the Holy Spirit, whose office is to "take of the things of Christ"—all parts of His redemption—"and show them unto us," that we may daily be more conformed to the image of the Son of God. Hence Christ is said to come "by water and blood," by blood taking away the guilt of sin, by water washing away the filth of it.

And it is so important that we should understand this, because we read, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and it is conformity to the image of the Son of God to which believers are predestinated (Rom. viii. 29). We must bear this in mind—no gifts, no endowments, no duties, can stand in the place of holiness. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," which is the Spirit of holiness, "he is none of His." Holiness is God's own mark on the soul, and it is due entirely to the blood of Christ. So much does God think of this! Observe His word in the 4th Psalm:—"Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself," as much as to say, "The godly man is the man for Me. This is he to whom I choose to give the blessings of eternity. This is he to whom I will be a God for ever and ever." This is the man that is set apart for the Lord. Now this is equally by the blood. And you can never cultivate that holiness without which no man shall see the

Lord but as you live near the blood. It is the blood, or, in St Paul's metaphorical language, the cross, which crucifies the world unto you, and you unto the world. You will never win the victory over the world, you will never be able to cope with that world which you carry in your own heart, but by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, is not this precious blood of Christ the very staple of Christianity? and as I said at the beginning, take it away, and all collapses, and man is left in a hopeless condition.

There is one other point which I will mention—

4. *Christ's blood was shed to confirm the covenant.* This is typified (Exod. xxiv. 8), "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." This subject is treated at large in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in part of the 9th chapter, from the 15th to the 24th

verses, to which I refer you, where you will see it is the death of Christ which gives force to His testament; so that the benefits procured by, and bequeathed to believers in His last will and testament, are abundantly confirmed and secured by His death. We know a bequest by will is a voluntary act, and so all that Christ bequeathes is a free gift. And as testators on earth usually leave their estates to their wives and children, so Christ has settled all upon His spouse, the Church, and on believers, His children. He gives them all temporal things richly to enjoy, He says they shall want no manner of thing that is good; indeed, though here on earth they are often, in one sense, poor, yet are they rich for they possess "all things."

Again, He gives them "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"—forgiveness of their sins, acceptance with God, adoption into His family, justification, sanctification. All the promises are theirs; the ministry of angels is theirs, to guard

them in this life, and all eternal blessings in the life to come; in short, He gives them not only grace, but glory. Now, my dear brethren, all this is confirmed by the death of Christ. This is the new testament in His blood, so that the promise is sure, and the estate certain, to all the heirs of promise. For when a will is properly made, and the testator dead, it cannot be annulled, it cannot be cancelled or set aside, it must take effect. Now as Christ died to put His testament in force, so He rises again to be the executor of His own will and testament; and all power to fulfil His own will is now in His hands, for "this is He that liveth, and was dead; and behold," saith He, "I am alive for evermore."

Here, then, we see that there are four distinct things connected with the death of Jesus Christ, "the Good Shepherd." These are particulars of the utmost consequence to you, my dear brethren. There is no freedom from danger, there is no safety for life,

there is no such thing as reconciliation with God, there is no being cleansed from sin, there is no such thing as inheriting your privileges under Christ's New Testament, but as you are resting upon His death.

The other point is this—

II. *Why He did it.* Why He laid down His life. The text says, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep;"—"for the sheep." Who are the sheep? The Lord speaks to the Jews in one case (John x. 26), and tells them that they did not believe because they were not of His sheep. "The sheep," then, I judge, are they whom "God chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love." They are those whom God "gave" to His Son, and of whom Christ said in His last prayer, "I have given eternal life to as many as thou hast given Me." I judge that they are the "many" spoken of in the 53d of Isaiah who will be

"justified by the knowledge of Christ," whose "iniquities He bears," "the seed" He shall see—"the travail of His soul," in saving whom He will be "satisfied." They are Jews, and they are Gentiles. As He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold," or flock, "and one shepherd." Now in this we see the safety of all believers. He giveth His life for the sheep. Christ has a purpose in His death; it is to save His sheep, and in the fulfilment of this purpose He will be satisfied. But I entreat you not to look at this purpose wrongly. Observe, it is, "the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." Now in examining yourselves, don't begin by asking, "Am I one of His sheep?" but begin by asking, "Have I believed His gospel? This is the proof I am called to give of being one of His sheep." No one becomes a child of God, or a sheep of Christ's flock, except by faith in Christ

Jesus; and no one can prove that he belongs to Christ but in this way,—people constantly err by beginning at the wrong end; by looking at the decrees of God instead of His mercy in the declaration of the gospel. Let me on this point quote to you a wise passage from an old writer. He says, "Salvation is to be considered three ways; either salvation decreed, salvation obtained, or salvation exhibited in the Word. Salvation decreed concerns the elect indeed; and the election shall obtain it! But this is not the first object of any man's faith. Who are elect is a secret, and secret things belong unto God. You are not concerned with salvation as it lies in the decree. Salvation obtained is what concerns believers, and this is not the object of any man's faith either, but rather the object of the sense of them who have it, when they know they have it. But salvation exhibited in the Word is what every man that hears the gospel is concerned with; salvation promised, salvation offered in the

dispensation of the gospel, with a particular invitation to every one to look to Christ for salvation.

"Now to lay hold of salvation here, as it lies in the word, is the safe way for you to take. If you lay hold on salvation exhibited to you in the Word, then you will come to find it salvation obtained; and when you find it salvation obtained, then you may find it salvation decreed. And this is the right order in which you ascend to God's decree, by taking hold of His Word, when to you the Word of this salvation is sent."—*R. Erskine*, vol. v., p. 326.

Now these appear to me, my dear brethren, to be words of wisdom. They teach us to begin with the promise of God in the preaching of the gospel; and then the moment you have laid hold of that salvation declared, and have got the thing, you may have all the consolation you can extract from having had salvation decreed to you by God from all eternity. Beginning at the election of God, which is one of His secret things, we only

perplex as well as harass our own minds, and disturb the souls of others too. Then, putting it before you thus—salvation proclaimed to you in the gospel—is it the case that you are really seeking salvation in the general promise of a preached gospel? Is that what you are doing? is that what you have done? This is the mark of His sheep, —hearing His voice, listening to His word, attending to what He says, and going forth and doing what He tells you.

Last week I pointed out to you two internal marks of the sheep, that the Lord alone can read:—the mark of His Spirit in your heart, the mark of His blood sprinkled upon your conscience. I have called your attention this week to these outward marks: —hearing His voice, attending to that voice, believing what He says, and going forth to prove the reality of your faith by your works.

Blessed are the sheep for whom Christ died. And though they be a little flock in comparison of the many that do not own His

care, yet they are many looked at in themselves. He says He gave His life a ransom for many; and we see (Rev. vii.) that that "many" is "a multitude that no man can number," gathered out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, under heaven; I say then to every one of you, be not cast down; "yet there is room;" room not only in heaven, where there are "many mansions," but room in Christ's heart, where there is infinite love. Remember, His atonement is the atonement of God, and therefore *infinite*. His blood is said (Acts xx. 28) to be the blood of God, and therefore *infinite*, —yea, infinitely sufficient for you and all that trust in Him. Therefore, I say, be of good cheer; His willingness, His sufficiency, His power, His love, are all on your side in the preached gospel; therefore accept Him as He is proposed to you. Let the good things He has purchased with His blood encourage you to trust in Him. All who believe in Him are "justified from all things."

They are made righteous; not only pardoned their iniquity, but made righteous. It matters not what they have been before—they are righteous now. They are not only made as if they had done no sin, but righteous as if they had fulfilled all righteousness. In truth, they are "complete in Him"—yes, "holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in His sight," for "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe." All that Christ did and suffered is accounted to them at once, they are pardoned at once, they are accounted righteous at once, and just as by one man's sin all men were made sinners at once, so all who trust in Christ are pardoned, and accepted, and made righteous at once. You have not to wait years for the blessing; it is connected with the act of believing, for "he that believeth in the Son of God *hath* everlasting life."

We see, then, my brethren, the blessedness of faith in Christ, the blessedness of trusting in "the Good Shepherd, who giveth His

life for the sheep." Let me just remind you of the points connected with His dying. Remember, 1st,—It is the blood sprinkled which frees from death;—"when *I* see the blood, I will pass over." It is the blood which saves life;—it is written, "The blood is the life." 2d,—It is the blood which makes atonement, and reconciles God and man;—it is written, "It is the blood which maketh an atonement for the soul." 3d,—It is the blood which "cleanseth from all sin." As the living bird, dipped in the blood over the running water, was let loose into the open field, so "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and "if the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed." And lastly, it is the blood which secures the blessings of the "everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure."

Oh! reverence this precious blood; prize this precious blood; cleave to this precious blood; and let no sophistry ever wean your heart and affections from entire dependence

upon it. The New Testament in Christ's blood is in force, for the Testator *has* died; the Good Shepherd *has* given His life for the sheep.

LECTURE III.

"THE GREAT SHEPHERD."

HEBREWS xiii. 20, 21.

'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THE resurrection from the dead is the best proof of the everlasting efficacy of Christ's atonement. And this morning we have to consider the Lord Jesus, "that Great Shepherd," rising again from the dead, as the Covenant-Head and Representative of all His sheep;—in Whom they are risen, and looked at in Whom, the God of peace, Who

raised Christ, will look upon them as well-pleasing in His sight. The Lord Jesus Christ did become, in His mediatorial work, "the Great Shepherd" of the sheep, by virtue of that covenant which was brought in by His blood. A special stress is laid upon the blood of the everlasting covenant, which gives assurance of the complete redemption and salvation of His Church.

The exposition of the text is somewhat this. You observe Christ is called not *the*, but "*that* Shepherd," "that Great Shepherd" —namely, the only One, Jehovah's Shepherd; He that was promised of old; the object of the faith and hope of the Church from the beginning. He is "great" on many accounts;—"great" in His Person, as the eternal Son of God, therefore far above angels and men; "great" in power to save His flock; "great" in His undertaking and in the effectual accomplishment of it; "great" in His glory and exaltation; in short, in every way incomparably great and

glorious. He is said to be the "Shepherd of the sheep"—of that flock of the elect which was given to Him by the Father, and for whom He laid down His life. The God of peace, to show peace was perfectly made, brought Him again from the dead, the law being fulfilled and the sheep redeemed by the death of the Shepherd. But He is said to do this "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Now this covenant was not the covenant of redemption, for the covenant of redemption had no surety, and needed no confirmation by blood, as it consisted in the eternal counsels between the Father and the Son. But it was the covenant of grace, made between God and man, the Mediator of which is Jesus Christ. The covenant of redemption may be said to be the foundation of the covenant of grace; and the everlasting nature of the covenant of grace hangs on the perpetuity of the covenant of redemption. It is called in the text, "everlasting," in opposition to the covenant

made at Sinai, which, as the apostle shows, was only for a time. The blood of this covenant is the blood of Christ, which, as I showed you last week, was shed, 1st, to save life and to deliver from danger; 2dly, to make atonement and reconciliation between God and man; 3dly, to cleanse from all sin; and 4thly, to confirm the New Testament; in short, to accomplish the will of God, to obtain eternal redemption, and to perfect for ever them that are sanctified.

Now the whole dispensation of grace depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But for this we are "yet in our sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). Christ could not have been brought again from the dead but for what He accomplished by the blood of the everlasting covenant. But this resurrection of Christ, dependent as it was on complete atonement and satisfaction through His blood, assures us of the complete redemption and salvation of the Church. And more, this bringing "again from the dead

that Great Shepherd of the sheep" is the great pledge of that peace which the God of peace has designed for His Church.

It will now be for me to remind you of some of the blessings and privileges of Christ's resurrection, as I did last week of His death, and to show the interest which all who are believers in the Son of God have in the present condition of Christ, not merely raised from the dead, but seated at God's right hand in heaven.

In speaking, then, of Christ's resurrection, I comprehend in it His perfect glory, at the right hand of the Father, as "the Great Shepherd." His resurrection was necessary to His entrance into glory, and was the first step of it; just as we see, typical of and illustrating this great truth, fetching Joseph out of prison was a necessary antecedent to his "riding in the second chariot." But I speak also of Christ's rising from the dead as the Head of those He died for. As He offered Himself for them upon the Cross, so

He entered into heaven to appear in the presence of God for them upon His throne. This is a very important thing for you, my dear brethren, to have a clear and distinct perception of, for otherwise you will never be able to grasp, by faith, all the full and wondrous glory of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will not be able to ascertain your own part and interest in it unless you bear this in mind, that Jesus Christ appears in the presence of God for His sheep. Now this glory of Christ is in accordance—

1. *With the promises made to Him.* Christ had engaged Himself to suffer on the Cross, and God had engaged to set Him on the throne of His glory; and as truly as Christ endured the Cross, so truly is He set down at the right hand of God. It was on this account—namely, because He had made His soul an offering for sin that "the God of peace brought Him again from the dead," "and gave Him glory." Had He not done

that, He would never have been in glory. And in prospect of what was to follow He could rejoice, as we read (Ps. xvi. 9–11), "Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Again we read (Isa. liii. 9, 10), "And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." All of which teaches us this,—He was to suffer on a cross, and then to live upon a throne. Now observe your own interest in it, you

who are believers in the Son of God. He was to "see His seed," and then "His days were to be prolonged," not in a suffering life, as He lived here, but in an everlasting life, as He has in glory now. For in this state it is, as we read (Isa. lv. 4, 5), that He is to be "a Leader and Commander to the people!" Now it is, as risen from the dead, and seated at the right hand of God in glory, "He shall call nations to know Him, and nations that knew Him not shall run unto Him, because of the Lord His God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified Him." It will be a part of my work upon another occasion, God willing, to show you what Christ is doing, as seated at the right hand of God in glory, in calling people and nations to run unto Him, and to make Himself known to them. And was not this glory in His mind when He said in His prayer (John xvii. 1), "Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." "The hour is come"—the

hour of My passion—the hour of Thy promise. And then observe what kind of glory it is that He is looking for. You may see it in the fifth verse: "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." This must have been Divine glory, the glory of His Godhead, for His humanity was not in being before the world was. This Divine glory had been obscured in His life here, but as God had promised Him glory, so He now pleads it. This is the way in which we are to understand that remarkable statement in 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." It comprehends, you see, the whole statement of His redeeming work, from time to eternity.

2. Again, *this glory was necessary upon His own account.* You remember what He

said to Nicodemus:—"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." He came down from heaven. And Paul tells us (1 Cor. xv. 47), that He was "the Lord from heaven." And though His heavenly glory was here veiled in flesh, yet now that His work was finished on earth, He must return to the original glory; and as earth was assigned as the home of the first man, who was of the earth, earthy; so heaven is the home of "the second man," who is "the Lord from heaven," and so, after His resurrection, His body was made immortal. Thus then "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." His body had new qualities conferred, whereby it became incorruptible and spiritual.

We see, then, the necessity of His glory

arising from that which He was in Himself "the Lord from heaven." But, again, His glory was necessary,

3. *On account of His own truth.* He was, as you know, dreadfully maligned by His enemies, and actually crucified on a charge of blasphemy. The Jews said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He hath made Himself the Son of God." But by His resurrection all was declared to be true. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when they charged Him with blasphemy, did not contradict it, or say that He was not the Son of God. By His dying He had shown Himself to be a real man; by His resurrection He showed Himself to be the Son of God; for He says, "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." And, again, had He not said what was true, or had He said what was not true, a God of truth would not have raised Him. But He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit

of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Let us now turn to the privileges which believers have in the resurrection of Christ.

1. *Christ, by entering into heaven, assures us of the justification of every believer.* They are free from condemnation. The price paid is all sufficient, and the discharge is certain and inviolable. As all believers are regarded as having died in Christ, and made satisfaction in His death, so they are all regarded as discharged in His resurrection. You remember that familiar challenge which Paul gives (Rom. viii. 33, 34), "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." There was the proof of the value of His death; "yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us."

Now Christ entered into heaven as a com-

mon person; and all, whose sins He bore, have a discharge in Him from any more suffering on account of sin—I mean penal suffering. Suffering is inflicted on God's people. So long as they are here in a state of discipline, being fitted for their rest hereafter, they will suffer from sin, the indwelling of sin, and the daily operation of sin around them, but not penally, as poured out upon them from God. For as Christ suffered, so was He acquitted, and entered into glory, as our Surety and Representative. How else can we understand Heb. ix. 27, 28? "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered"—why?—"to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Yes, my brethren, it was the purging *our* sins, not His own; it is for the purging our sins, not His own, that He is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and His throne being for ever (you

remember the words, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever"); the virtue of His sacrifice, on account of which He is upon the throne, is for ever also. Now in this lies the secret and security of the believer's justification. He was delivered for your offences, He was raised again for your justification. Your justification is testified and proved by His being raised again and now having entered into glory.

There is another consideration of great value to you in your conflict here on earth.

2. *Christ entering into heaven assures us of help in trial.* Our Head and Representative was "made perfect through suffering." "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." He does not forget His own lessons, nor what His own children have to bear and learn, and to learn by bearing. If He has a Divine and Almighty arm, He has also a human heart in heaven, one that can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He has the same earnestness to help

us now He is on His throne, that He had to die for us when He was upon the Cross. Nothing turned Him aside from that, nor can anything turn Him aside from this. He knows He has left behind Him a suffering people, but He has not left them orphans. What are His words ? " I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." And He does come to them, and comfort them by His Holy Spirit, and by His word of promise, and by His providences, and by His grace, in ten thousand nameless ways; for He ever "knows how to speak a word in season to them that are weary." He is deeply interested in all that befalls His people. He watches them most closely to see the effect of all His dealings with them. He observes whether they are going backwards or forwards in their spiritual course, and He adapts His treatment to their need with the utmost exactness. Jesus is not an uninterested spectator of you at this very moment. He is looking to see how you are receiving the

statements connected with His glory, and your own relation to Him in that glory He can see whether your hearts are touched by what He has done for you, or whether you are listening to it merely as cold, abstract truth, as that with which you have no particular individual and personal concern. Jesus is interested in the way in which you listen to His word at this very moment, and I trust that He is able to see in all your hearts a spirit of thankfulness for what He has done for you, as well as a spirit of dependence upon Him in all the circumstances in which you may be placed for the time to come. He cannot mark out a place in the many mansions that are in heaven, for any of His children that are still upon earth, without thinking of their suffering state here. No, He is counting upon the time when you shall come to fill those mansions, when His enemies shall be made His footstool, when all His children shall be gathered, and He shall "see of the travail of His soul."

And what a comfort it ought to be to you, my dear brethren, tried as you may be in ten thousand ways, to know that you have a glorified Head in heaven Who is not indifferent to all that goes on amongst you upon earth; but Who is as intent upon fitting you to dwell with Him as He was earnest in shedding His blood that your souls might be cleansed from sin. And you may be assured of this, that He can as soon forget His own glory in heaven as forget any part of His suffering body upon earth. You may be of good cheer; He Who, while in the form of a servant, destroyed Him that had the power of death—that is, the devil—cannot surely want power to beat down your enemies now that He sits as King upon His throne. No, He can silence all Satan's storms as He did the winds and the waves, and the members can never perish so long as the Head is safe.

3. *Christ entering into heaven assures us that all the promises of the gospel will be fulfilled.* Perhaps your hearts at times are

wondering whether you shall ever know the full joy and blessedness of those things that God has promised to you. Take heart, dear brethren, when you remember where your Lord and Saviour is. Now if, as we read (Rom. xv. 8), our Lord suffered death "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers," He lives in heaven to perform them! We read (Acts xiii. 34) that "the *sure* mercies" of David were established at His resurrection—"the *sure* mercies." God assures us that Christ shall die "no more," but shall live to dispense the blessings He has purchased, and to accomplish those covenant promises in His glory, which He sealed with His blood. And if in His humiliation He was so exact in doing this and that, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," will He be less exact in performing the promises of God now that He is in glory? No; "the Scripture cannot be broken," and you may rest satisfied that He, in whom all these promises are "yea and amen, to the glory of God,"

will fulfil them every one, in all their fulness, to all His children that trust them and plead them.

4. Again, *Christ's glory is a pledge of the glory of believers.* What is the position of the believer now, already, at this moment? "He is raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And it is an earnest, also, of all that is necessary for the enjoyment of that glory. Now, here comes in the grand subject of the believer's sanctification. You are to be "made meet to partake the inheritance of the saints in light." Your justification is complete; it is certain and sure; you never can be more justified than you are now, if believers in the Son of God. But Christ will work in you that measure of sanctification which He sees fit, so that some shall bring forth thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. But never forget your own responsibility in connexion with this part of the subject. If "God worketh in you both to will and to do

of His good pleasure," you are to be "workers together with God;" you are to be fellow-labourers with Him in this spiritual building. You have a charge and a responsibility in connexion with keeping the commandments of God, and in the exercise of all that grace that He confers upon you for this end particularly, that you may glorify Him here by your life and conversation. I need not remind you, my dear brethren, that the path of God's commandments is the only path of pleasantness and peace. Holiness is the only way to happiness, for as Redeemer, Christ is to "present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Now the power, which "raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," is the same that is

at work in believers for their sanctification. It is a mighty power—it is a Divine power. You may be of good cheer. He Who works in you is able to cast down "imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," and to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There is no besetment which the power of God cannot overcome; there is no lust, to which you may have been enslaved for years, which the power of the Lord Jesus cannot break through. He will enable you so to carry your cross, and so to deny yourself, that you shall glorify Him. He, by His mighty power, can lift you up above this earth and all the entanglements of it, and set your heart free in His service; for He Who "chose you in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world that you might be holy and without blame before Him in love," is the same Who has "predestinated you to be conformed to the image of His dear Son." Oh! think on these privi-

leges; think on this mighty power which must be put forth in you to conform such as you are to the image of God's Son. But "there is nothing too hard for the Lord!" Unpromising as may be the subject, infinitely powerful is the great Actor; and He who works in you "both to will and to do of His good pleasure," is able to work out all that He has promised.

Besides, my dear brethren, believers are God's adopted children, and as such it is their privilege to be led by the Spirit of God. Christ's first act after His ascension was to send the Holy Ghost, not only to comfort, but to teach and to cleanse, and to comfort by cleansing. And that is a very instructive thought for you—to *comfort by cleansing;* that you may be delivered from all the sorrow, and the shame, and the tears, connected with departure from the ways of God and truth; and that by means of the comforting power of the Holy Ghost you may be separated more in spirit from the world, more and more

from sin, and more and more from everything that defiles the whiteness of the garment which you ought to keep. For He is a Spirit of holiness, and works holiness by truth. Think of that again — *He works holiness by truth.* What was our Lord's prayer? "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." It is by the power of the Word. It is not a mere ceremonial cleansing, it is not by forms, it is not by anything that is merely external; but He comes and sweeps and garnishes the heart, sprinkles the cleansing blood upon the soul and the conscience, and cleanses the thoughts by the inspiration of His own Holy Spirit; and thus makes the mind pure, and lifts the man, in all the powers that he has, above low, carnal, dying things, to hold communion and citizenship with Christ above. And so it is that the Word is the great cleansing power. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." And you may be sure of this,

that our Lord Jesus Christ does not forget, now that He has entered into glory, what He prayed for just previous to that glory; for if He wills His people to be with Him, we may be sure He will fit and prepare them for it. It is on this ground that the apostle prays in the text, that "the God of peace would make them perfect in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ." Oh, never forget, my dear brethren, that there is no such thing as growing in grace, if we neglect the study of the Word of God. That is the great directory by which you are to guide every movement of your history. Obedience to the Word of God and conformity to Jesus Christ are no less the will of God than the happiness of man. And all God's children are being daily "conformed to the image of the Son of God," as the Shepherd and the sheep are one in spirit. Our Lord lived when upon earth, as He himself tells us, not "by bread only, but

by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" and all God's children, who are to be glorified, are to be made fit for that glory in the same way. And just as Paul argues that if Christ be risen believers will rise, so it is your privilege to feel if Christ be entered into glory believers shall enter into glory too. When Christ shall appear believers "will appear with Him in glory;" and not only that—"they will be like Him, for they will see Him as He is." This shows us that He has entered in as the Head to take possession for His people. He has entered in as their Forerunner to prepare a place for those who are to follow, and some must follow, or He is no Forerunner.

I say then to you, my dear brethren, "fear not; only believe." Believers are to be with Him where He is, to behold His glory, and to live in fellowship and communion with Him for ever. He must have His people with Him; for His glory is only then at its fulness, when all are with Him;

that is, "when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." Here, then, is one way to help you,

1. Meditate on the glory of Christ, *it will one day be yours;* a wonderful thought, but no less wonderful fact. Keep your heart on Him, you will soon be with Him. Remember it is your Lord, your Head, your Forerunner, Who is in glory. It will establish you in obedience as the only path to Him; it will enable you to take up your cross day by day, to deny yourself, and to walk in newness of life, "even as He walked."

2. Meditate on the glory of Christ, *it will help your faith.* Think where Christ is, think through what sufferings He got there. It will show you how fit He is to be trusted. This is the way Paul encouraged Timothy. He said to him, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." As much as to say, Keep that in your mind.

If you are inclined to faint through your sufferings and trials, think not only of the sufferings of Christ, but think that He was raised from the dead in spite of them, that He came out of the grave, and ascended to the right hand of God. The glory of Christ is a full confirmation of the value of the gospel. What need to faint when we see the cross has become a crown? Be not then ashamed of the testimony of Christ; be not ashamed to confess Him before the world, and He will confess you in the midst of all that you are called upon to suffer as your testimony of love to Him.

3. Again, I say, meditate upon His glory, *it will encourage you in prayer.* He is in heaven as your Advocate, your Advocate with the Father. He is praying for you. As High Priest, it is a part of His office to receive and present the prayers of His people. And how confidently may we come to Him Who is entered in for us. You remember in the 14th chapter of John that there is an

expression at the end of the 12th verse, "Because I go unto My Father." You know that in the original there was no punctuation and no division in the verses. A great many therefore read the end of the 12th verse in connexion with the 13th, "Because I go unto My Father whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do." We may have that confidence, although our verse is not so punctuated, for it is because Christ has gone to the Father that we may have whatsoever we ask in His name.

4. And once more I say, meditate upon the glory of Christ, *it will lift you above the world and fix your heart more in heaven.* If we looked more upon Christ in heaven, our conversation would be more there. If we were always dwelling upon Him there, our hearts would more seek those things that are above, and we should less esteem those things in which Christ is not. Oh, let this guide you; consider, What is the value of this or that if there be no Christ and no

eternity in it? Why do I hug this, which does not belong to the Lord Jesus Christ at all? Let me strive that my whole soul be absorbed in the Lord Jesus, then I shall dwell more upon those things in which He is, and sit more lightly to those things in which He is not. Then the God of grace and peace will work His will within you, and so prepare you to live and reign with "the great Shepherd of the sheep" for ever and ever!

LECTURE IV.

"THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF SOULS."

1 PETER ii. 25.

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

"THE Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." These words present to us our Lord Jesus Christ in another relation to His flock, as "the Shepherd and Bishop," or Overseer; One Who takes the oversight indeed of "the flock, not by constraint, but willingly;" One "Whose own the sheep are;" One Who exercises His office now as Shepherd and Overseer in the gathering and tending His flock, until all, who are now "scattered abroad," shall be "gathered to-

gether in one." We have considered our Lord as "the Good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep;" and also as "the Great Shepherd," rising again and entering into heaven as their Head and Representative. Now we are to consider Him as "the Shepherd and Bishop," Whose work is to find His sheep and bring them to the knowledge of Himself, and thus to manifest them as those who hear His voice and follow Him.

You observe how the flock are spoken of here, "Ye were as sheep going astray." All God's people are in themselves as forlorn, and helpless, and as exposed to destruction, as a sheep that has strayed from the fold. None is excepted from this description. Paul speaks of himself, if you remember, as "by nature a child of wrath, even as others." And in Isaiah liii., it is written, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." They agree in this, you see they are all

wanderers; and though they wander each in his own way, according to their peculiar propensities, temptations, and lusts, yet all have wandered far from God, all are by nature at a distance from "the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls." We are not to confine this wandering to mere outward irregularity of conduct, for some are so hedged about, either by family restraints, or by the conventions of life, that their course is outwardly correct. But there is the wandering of the heart, which is far more serious and important, for "out of the heart are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23). We know that there are many sheep who are perhaps hedged about, as I have said, by family restraints, who are in spirit ever overleaping the bounds of the flock; they are ever hankering after that which is at variance with the footsteps of the Shepherd; they are longing for that which is forbidden, although they may outwardly be kept within the proper bounds. Now the Lord sees all this irregularity of

heart, and He deals with all His people according to the condition of their hearts. Never forget it is the heart that is the real stranger to God; it is the heart that leads all the members of the body astray, and causes all the sins which deform a man's life. This is why the Lord does His work in the heart, and makes His power to be felt there; and this is why there is no real restraint in the sight of God until the restraint is laid upon the heart. It is here that His drawings tell; it is in the heart that the return really begins; it is the heart that the Lord lays hold of in the case of the text; and so it is said of them they "*are* returned." As I have said, they may never outwardly have overleaped the bounds of the fold, yet, although within the outward pale, they may still be strangers to God; and so it is not until their heart is yielded to the Lord that they can be said to have returned.

It is not my purpose to speak this morning of those who "are returned," further than

to say that they have all entered into the true fold by the "One door of the sheep"—Jesus Christ; they have all been forgiven their iniquity by the blood which "the Good Shepherd" shed. When "the Great Shepherd of the sheep" was "brought again from the dead," they were looked upon as having risen in Him, and are now seated mystically, by faith, with Him "in the heavenlies." They "are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls." But the subject of this morning is the work of this "Shepherd and Bishop of souls" in bringing His sheep to the knowledge of Himself. And there are two points that I would direct your attention to—

I. *His knowledge of the sheep.*

II. *The pains He takes to find and restore them.*

I. *His knowledge of the sheep.* 1. *Who they are.* We are told of this (John x. 14 and 27), "I know My sheep." They are all

the gift of the Father to Him. And so they that return are, in some sort, His sheep even while they are wandering. Being His by election of the Father, it is "the Shepherd and Bishop's" work to "search them out, and find them," and bring them back. Now on this ground it is necessary that He should know them; and from His own infinite knowledge it is impossible that He should not know them. When we think of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, how is the mind lost in contemplating it. If our minds dart backward to eternity, so far at least as they are able to do, before time was, Christ loved His sheep. If our minds spring forward on the wings of time until those wings shall flag, and time shall stand still, and die, Christ loves His sheep still. His is an infinite love. So it is with His knowledge. Well may the Psalmist say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it"! Christ has a perfect and complete knowledge of all the elect. He knew them

before they fell in Adam, and "He knows whom He has chosen" (John xiii. 18); and it will be seen, at the last, that they are those who were "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world;" they are those whom God gave Him. "The foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth them that are His." Their names are all "written in the Lamb's book of life."

But it is said (John x. 3) that "He calleth His own sheep," and more, "He calleth His own sheep *by name*." If, as the Psalmist says, "He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names;" He also surely knows those that are to "shine as the stars for ever and ever." If He has "numbered the hairs of their heads," He surely knows those who are "graven on the palms of His hands." He has "formed them for His glory;" and, with this object in view, His eye is on them at all times. His word to them is, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee

by thy name; thou art Mine." It is said that, in the East, the shepherd gives names to all his sheep; he calls them, and they hear his voice, and follow him. So it is with Christ's sheep. When He speaks, and when they hear His voice in the heart, the very dead live. Not only, as in the case of Levi, do men of business close their books and follow Him; but the fierce persecutor Saul, when his name was called, bowed down and said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" It is a solemn thought, my brethren, that Christ knows all His sheep in this congregation. He could point them out every one, He could name every name. And it ought to be a consolation to you that love Him, or desire to love Him, that He often does name your name to the Father. He "prays for you, that your faith fail not." He knows all your circumstances in all their details, so that He can present your case with all the truth and skill of a wise and loving Advocate. Man does not know Christ's

sheep. Ministers do not know all Christ's sheep. His sheep may not know themselves; but Christ knows them; knows their hearts. And it ought to make you look within, when you consider what does He know of me? What does He see in me? When He exercises His office as "Overseer" in investigating my heart, does He see loyalty in me?—love to Himself? or does He see unloyalty? — wandering desires, wandering affections? does He see my heart faithful? or can He see many things dividing my love? can He see many things taking off the fervour of my attachment to Him, and rendering me cold and hesitating in my service. These, my dear brethren, should be matters of solemn consideration with us; and I am sure they would often bring us to our knees in penitence, if we really dealt with the desires of the heart as we ought to do. But still Christ does see these things, and Christ does deal with you with reference to these things; Christ is always intensely interested

in observing these things of you and in you.

But there is encouragement for you in the expression, "He calleth His own sheep *by name.*" When you really love a person, not only his voice, but the very sound of his name often sends a thrill through the heart; and to hear your own name pronounced by him is sweeter still. What did the disconsolate Mary feel at the sepulchre when the risen Saviour said unto her, "Mary"? Christ loves the names of those for whom He died; He often speaks to them, and with them in communion; He sends loving messages by His Spirit, by His Word, by His providences, and is ever making them sensible of the lov He bears them. But if He knows *who they are,* He also knows *what they are.* This is a solemn thought again. To be known accurately throughout, so that there is not a thought in the heart but "Thou, O God knowest it altogether"—I say, this is solemn thing. We should expire with shame

to have men know all we are, and think, and have done. But to know that this is all "open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do," is, I repeat, a solemn reflection. Nothing hides His sheep from Him. He knows what they are. No matter whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant; He looks through their present condition; He knows them as "chosen in Him;" He sees them "complete in Him"—part of that glorious Church which He is to present to Himself, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish." No matter how sunk they may be now in the abominations of sin—whether they are like the Corinthians, "thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners," —He sees them "washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of their God." What a marvel is this! No disguise of mean occupation or besotted worldliness can hide them. He sees them all. He knew Matthew and Zaccheus in

spite of their publican's garb and calling. He knew Peter in his fisher's coat, and Nathanael under the fig-tree. Luke, "the beloved physician," did not escape His eye, nor the humble "Phœbe, the servant of the church at Cenchrea." He misses none. He knows their hearts, their circumstances, their sorrows, their sins, their hindrances, their desires, their efforts, their prayers. He knows all about them; nothing escapes Him. His mind is ever on them, bearing with them, until the hour shall come when they shall hear His voice and follow Him, and show themselves to be His disciples.

Now in this congregation, how many have really heard His voice, and are in heart at this moment following Him? How many are there whose lives testify that they "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?" How many are there whose walk shows that they love to follow "the footsteps of the flock," to go with the Lamb whithersoever He shall lead them? How many are there in whose

hearts He sees self-will is being daily crushed, self daily being put under foot, and Christ exalted within? But let us look now at—

II. *The pains He takes to find and restore them.* What do we read (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12)? "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Surely this may be a comfort to us in our circumstances. May it not be said, without exaggeration, that we live in cloudy and dark days, in which God's sheep are scattered; in which many stumble and go astray, because the light of truth is darkened by false shepherds? So the sheep are driven from the fold of God. And indeed, may not the whole passage in this 34th chapter of Ezekiel, from the 17th to the 22d

verses, be applied to the way in which the fountains of religious instruction are defiled and corrupted, and the Word of God rendered of none effect? But, blessed be God, the truth remains. God says, "I will save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey." "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He knows their works; yea, even where they dwell, as we read (Rev. ii. 13), He knows where they are hidden for a time; and when His hour is come, He will bring them "out from the world," and will both incline their hearts to come, and, by His providence, open a door for them, and remove every difficulty out of the way. And now I would ask you, my brethren, whether the Lord is not, by His Spirit, searching some of you? you, I mean, who may have been halting between two opinions? you whose conscience may have been stirred to feel that your course is not what it ought to be, but who have not had sufficient godly resolution, nor have made the matter sufficiently

one of prayer, to take the necessary step of yielding yourselves unto Him? The Spirit of God may have been striving with you, teaching you here and there, not always by moving the affections of your heart towards the Lord, but by opening your understandings to understand the demands He makes upon you in Scripture. The Spirit of God often moves upon a man's reason as well as upon his conscience; and there are an infinite variety of ways in which this good "Shepherd and Bishop of souls" works in order that the sheep may return to Him. And although it be wholly His power in you which enables you to arise, and come to Him, yet He expects you to be fellow-workers together with Him. It will never be done without a struggle: it will never be done without an effort. Then the question comes whether your understanding and your reason are not sufficiently enlightened to convince you that you ought to make this effort? Then there comes the further consideration whether your

lusts and your indolence, and your unbelief, may not have altogether prevented your making this effort? Whether your love of self-indulgence has not defeated your knowledge of the demands of God? Whether the leaning to self has not been grieving the Holy Spirit of God? All these things are for your solemn consideration.

But still, my brethren, the passage is a comforting one, particularly when taken in connexion with what we read (Luke xiv. 21 and 23), "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.—Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Now this, we must remember, is our Lord's blessed work at this present time; and although there are not wanting those who think that the work of the Lord seems to be going on very slowly, at any rate in our own country, yet there have been tokens of blessing in the revivals which God

has sent. And although there seems to be sad hardness in the midst of many fixed congregations; so that there is little growth and little stir; little more effort in the way of godliness; very little more exercise of self-denial—in some cases perhaps not any; and there seems to be a blight over the minds of men, who, having had the means of grace, have failed to use them as they ought to have done, and so are left in hardness. Still, my dear brethren, it is God's blessed work now, at this present time, to find and gather His sheep. His great design, by His under shepherds, by His ministers, Scripture readers, district visitors, Bible women, is to "seek and to save that which is lost." And oh! when we think of the streets and the lanes of this great city; of the numbers who are wandering without a Shepherd; when we think of their ignorance, misery, vice, and crimes;—and when, on the other hand, we think of the squares and palaces, of the luxury, the self-indulgence, the abandon-

ment to pleasure, the refined indifference, the infidelity, and the utter forgetfulness of God;—may we not ask anxiously, Has God "much people in this city?" If so, where are they? Are they among the rich? Are they among the poor? Shall we find them among the learned? Are they among high Church, low Church, broad Church, no Church? Are they among Papists, Dissenters, Rationalists, Ritualists, Formalists? Is not the number one meets with, who leave behind them the impression that they are really Christ's, lamentably small? Alas! it is. You feel this, I do not doubt, dear brethren. Still Christ has His sheep though you and I may seldom see them. The flock is a little one. It is "not many" that are called; but, blessed be God, it is not, *not any*—there are some. Yes, we trust Christ has many a Lazarus and many a Magdalene in our crowded courts, though clad in rags; and many a wealthy Gaius in our splendid houses, clothed in purple and

fine linen. Oh! He searches everywhere for them. This is the comfort. In the palace of our queen—and what a mercy to know that He found Obadiah in the court of the wicked Ahab, and knew all "the saints in Cæsar's household." He searches among all the means that are taken to bring sinners to the knowledge of Himself. He graciously comes down to "the midnight meetings;" and may we not trust that, to many a woman that was a sinner, He has said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace"? Oh, every sheep that hears His voice and follows Him shall return unto "the Shepherd and Bishop of their soûls."

And observe, my dear brethren, 3, His *patience*. What do we read (Luke xv. 4, 5)? "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing."

You observe it is not one search, but many; not one call, but many, "until He find it." How thankful should we be for that little word "*until*." Observe again, "Behold, I *stand* at the door, and knock." "I continue there knocking; I have stood there some time, continuing to knock." But we must remember that the very statement involves the fact that He will not stand there always. I stand now, to-day; but there is no promise for to-morrow. But when we look back at what He has done, we see how patient He has been; going over the same ground again and again; repeating the same warnings, pressing the same encouragements, proclaiming the same truth, until He finds the sheep attentive to His voice. Well are we taught to "account the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation," for it is "until" His sheep hear Christ's voice, and yield itself up, and He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing.

And then, my brethren, what takes place

in heaven? Then "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God." This is very wonderful. A publican or harlot saved can waken joy above. And the song of the redeemed, the chief music in heaven, is always in connexion with the blood of Jesus. Surely this ought to be sufficient to convince every man of the preciousness of that blood. Surely if they, whose spiritual eyes are opened, who no longer "see through a glass darkly," who do not "know in part, but even as they are known," if they are represented as ever praising that blood, and acknowledging that the very fact of their being there hangs upon that blood, how ought you and I to prize it? What a safeguard this ought to be to us against all those who would speak slightingly of this blood; who would endeavour in the smallest degree to weaken the value of the Atonement. If they that are in heaven can understand the preciousness of it, much more ought you and I to pray that we may understand it, for we need it in

a sense that they do not now. We need it for our sins; that day has passed away with them. They may need it for their enjoyment and for their standing; but their souls are saved, they are made "white in the blood of the Lamb, and therefore they are before the throne," and they bless God for the mercy He has shewn them. May we learn from these thoughts, dear brethren.

And again, when we think of the "joy that is in heaven in the presence of the angels of God" at the salvation of one of Christ's sheep, what grandeur does this give to the gospel!—to preaching—to missionary work throughout the world. How it dwarfs, and consigns to nothingness, by comparison, the events of the world of which men think so much. The conquest of a kingdom, the coronation of a king, is as nothing to a sinner saved—no, nothing; and a soul saved is a joy for ever. There is no weakening that salvation; the sheep are safe, and safe for ever. Christ says, "I give unto My sheep

eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

And when Christ brings them home, He not only changes their nature, but He gives them a new name. When God established His covenant with Abram, He changed his name to Abraham. And so when the Jews are brought to Christ we read (Isa. lxii. 2), they shall be called "by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." And what do we read in Rev. iii. 12? "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall no more go out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven, from My God; and I will write upon him My new name." And so when a believer is brought home to God, he receives a new name. What is it? Then he has a right to be called a "Christian,"—a Christian in deed and in truth, not before.

Then he has a right to be called "a child of God" and "an heir of glory," not before. He is "a joint heir with Christ," when he is brought home into the fold of Christ. But you must remember this, my dear brethren, that no mere outward privileges can confer this right. England may be called a Christian nation, as contrasted with some of the heathen kingdoms in the midst of Africa; but they alone are Christians who belong to Christ, and upon whose hearts the new name is written by the power of the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is important, brethren, for us to look beneath the surface; it is important for us not to confound the sign with the thing signified. We must be Christians in deed and in truth. That is the only new name which the Lord will give to His children.

But it is not merely those who have not yet known Him that He seeks and finds but *backsliders* also, as David and Peter It is said in the text, "ye are returned;" but it is not by their own skill and wisdom

they discover their error, and find out the right path back; it is not by their own strength they return, no, Christ brings them back into the way of life. What is said in Ezekiel xxxiv. 16? "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." And when David is comforting himself with the thought of the Lord being his Shepherd, he says, "He restoreth my soul." Yes, He goeth after it "until" He has restored it, and when He hath found it, does He leave it, after having pointed out the way? No, saith David, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake;" or, as it is put in Luke xv., "He lays it on His shoulders," and brings it home. And how does He deal with it then? Does He reprove it for wandering? No, "He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing." Oh, what a wonderful view this gives us of God's love; how it does confirm what we read of the

return of the prodigal. There was no word of reproach to him from the father because he left his father's house, and spent all his substance in riotous living. All that was forgiven and forgotten; there was nothing but joy—the best robe, and the ring upon the hand, and the shoes on the feet, and the best feast, the fatted calf; and there was nothing but rejoicing and merriment, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Oh, can you not draw comfort from that, dear brethren? "Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more. I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Who but God could deal so with us? How few parents there are, when a child returns penitently, that can forbear to reproach the child for having deserved to be reproved. How very few are there that can really forget as well as forgive. But our God does, and deals with us as if the whole thing was blotted out for ever, never to be

mentioned again. What consolation is this? It is not, you know, because He does not remember, because God cannot forget, but it is because God deals with us according to His infinite grace. It is because He is gracious, and can forgive and can forget. It is because He has the large-heartedness which belongs to His nature that it is His glory to pass over a transgression. Let us try and learn in all this.

And when we read that it is He who seeks and searches out and finds, it is because lost man can no more return to Him unsought than a sheep would return. Men may have some confused, vague thoughts about returning; but they have neither wisdom to know the way, nor resolution to try it, yourselves being witnesses. You know how many more things you might do if you were earnest in your service of the Lord. You know how many more steps you might set in the right direction, instead of being content always to remain where you are.

All these things will testify to the need you have that the Great Shepherd should search you out, and bring you to the knowledge of Himself. What does the Psalmist say in Psalm cxix. *ult.?* "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant!" He knew that he had gone astray like a lost sheep; he knew that his own strength and resolution were unequal to return; therefore his prayer, "Seek Thy servant."

Now this is the work of "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." And, my dear brethren, on those very shoulders which bore the iniquity of our wanderings by expiation, He bears and brings back His sheep by effectual conversion. It is the same Shepherd that died for you that is ever searching for you, and willing to save you. And He is always at this work. From Him and from His guidance flows all the real comfort of the flock. And this may give you confidence—that His hand will lead you, His arm sustain you. When you think

of your own folly, it may relieve you to remember that it is His wisdom that is guiding you. When you think of your own perversity and mourn over it, as I trust you often do, it may console you to reflect that His tender love pities you. He is not only perfect in knowledge to foresee all your wants, but He is also graciously able and willing to provide for them every one.

Let me ask you, dear brethren, in conclusion, whether your hearts are warmed with love to such "a Shepherd and Bishop" as this: *a real Bishop;* One That really oversees the flock; One That neglects none; One Who is never so occupied with other things as to forget the smallest wants of any of the feeblest of the flock; and One Who is not merely occupied with their wants, but also graciously occupied in meeting them; Whose bountiful hand is opened upon you day by day, filling you with all good things. Yes, He never means less than this. In whatever He does for you,

blessing and goodness are His end. It is what David says at the end of Psalm xxiii., where he is speaking of the Lord being his Shepherd, — "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;" follow as one follows another for the purpose of treading upon his heels; and so the Lord is always overrunning you with mercies, overwhelming you with goodness. If you would but look at Him in what He is to you, oh how much more consolation might you perpetually draw from His providence! But instead of interpreting what He does by what He is, you are allowing your own poor judgment to be exercised upon His conduct; you think Him altogether such an one as yourself, and so you lose the comfort, just as you lose the instruction.

Beloved brethren, I ask, Are you sensible of your proneness to stray, so sensible as that you desire to hang wholly upon the Lord to save you? And I ask, Have you really "returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of

your souls?" Have you been brought really to know, and to love, and to serve the Lord Jesus heartily? And when you are conscious of having strayed and wandered from His ways, what is your mode of return? Is it His blood? Is that your simple way of return? Or do you try to come by bye-paths and crooked ways—your prayers, your works, your greater diligence? That is not the way home. The way home to the fold again is by Him Who is "the Door"—no other way. To attempt to climb up some other way is the work of a thief and a robber. Come simply to the Lord Jesus. And I ask you, my brethren, you who trust that you are really "standing fast in the Lord," is yours a daily, hourly coming again to Him, asking to be cleansed as well as to be kept? Our Lord has told us (John xiii. 10), that "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Are you alive to those constant

defilements which you contract as you pass through the world? Are you alive to that fountain of iniquity which is ever welling up in your own heart? Are you alive to the temptations to which you are subject in all your senses? Every sense you have is an inlet of temptation. Are you alive to the working of desire and will?—all those "chambers of imagery" which are ever at work within? These may show you your constant need of being cleansed. These may teach you also the necessity of prayer that you may be kept—kept close to the Shepherd, kept aloof from the love of the world, kept in the path of truth in these days of departure from it.

Oh, I would say, study "the footsteps of the flock," seek to follow where the Good Shepherd feeds and "maketh His flock to *rest*" (Cant. i. 7). That is the place of safety and peace; of spiritual growth and prosperity. Be persuaded that the place of

usefulness in your day and generation, the place of happiness and rest, is by the side of "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

LECTURE V.

THE SHEPHERD FEEDING.

ISAIAH xl. 11.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

No term perhaps could have been used more intelligible and encouraging to us than that under which the Lord Jesus Christ is represented in the text. We all know, more or less, the duty of a shepherd. The watchful care required of him, as well as the gentle readiness to help, conveys to the mind of the sinner an idea of the practical comfort there is in Christ as the Shepherd of His flock, which is very consoling. And, if you remember, David in the 23d Psalm uses this term,

as expressive of the supply of all his wants ; —"The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want." Again, the calm secluded nature of a shepherd's calling, far removed from the bustle and strife of the world, sets forth the peaceful character of the kingdom of Christ, separated from the world, which lieth in the wicked one ; and the constant attendance of the shepherd on his flock shows the unceasing care of Christ for His people in every circumstance and want. Indeed, the immediate context would seem to teach this, for if you look at the previous verse you will read, "His reward is with Him, and His work before Him ;" and then comes the text ;—"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd ;" as if His chief work were to feed His flock, and to attend to their every want. And that is, indeed, my brethren, the simple fact ;—that is the occupation of the Lord Jesus Christ at this moment. Seated at the right hand of the throne of God, in the enjoyment of "the glory which He had with

the Father before the world was," He is now intent upon gathering in His flock, scattered as they are throughout the world, attentive to their every want, developing their character, teaching them, and preparing them to take their place visibly by His side upon His throne.

Our subject, this morning, is the Shepherd's care of His flock during their discipline here.

By the term "flock" we may understand all true believers in Christ, that hear His voice, and follow Him; and there are some lessons connected with the term which it may be useful for us to notice. I have already said, in my first lecture, that the flock consists of Jews and Gentiles, of all ages and conditions, whom Christ is daily gathering to the knowledge of Himself. And although in all ages of the world it has been a "little flock," yet at the last, when all are gathered, it will be "a multitude that no man can number." It is called "a flock,"

1. *To mark their separation from the world.* Those who are Christ's true sheep have no real connexion with those who still continue in the broad field of the world, but are gathered in, delivered from the hand of the great enemy, Satan, hedged off from his destroying power, though still they are buffeted by his temptations; for he is ever "like a roaring lion," prowling near, seeking to get an advantage, and looking on them with an evil eye. And that malignant feeling, which speaks ill of those who would "live godly in this present world," proclaims but too many to be his followers; for as Christ says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

2. The term "flock" also *expresses the association of believers with each other, for Christian fellowship, instruction, and encouragement.* How beautiful is the description given of them (Malachi iii.), "Then they

that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

3. Again, it would express *their mutual love to each other, as members of one body, partakers of a common faith, a common hope, a common love, their union in defence of Christian truth, and mutual help of each other.* The history of the early Christians is full of the deepest interest in this point of view; and we know that at that time their mutual love to each other was carried so far that "they had all things common; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts

ii. and iv.). The spread of Christianity and the circumstances of our times have long ago rendered this impossible; but still there is nothing to hinder the going forth of hearty love one to another, of hearty interest one in the other, of hearty sympathy with each other in trouble and sorrow, and a hearty readiness to help, according as the Lord shall give us power.

But although this flock of Christ be thin and scattered now, and many are still lost in the world, yet of this "beautiful flock" (Jer. xiii. 20), whom the Father hath given to the Son, all shall come. Not one will Christ lose. He will raise each up at the last day, and then shall He lead them beside the still waters, and cause them to lie down in green pastures, and to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Ps. xxiii.). But the text says,—

"He shall *feed* His flock." Now the term "feed," as I have already explained to you, sets forth the whole of the office of a

shepherd—namely, "to strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bind up that which was broken, to bring again that which was driven away, to seek that which was lost" (Ezek. xxxiv. 4), and to rule all gently. Now with respect to actually administering to their support, it is said of our Lord that "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," with the wisdom, the skill, the adaptation to their wants, that a skilful shepherd exercises always. They shall not always be fed with food that they desire. We have often seen sheep bleating at the edge of their fold, desiring to get out and to seek fresh pasture. But the shepherd only gives them that fresh pasture when he knows it to be suitable for them: not when they happen to ask or cry for it, but when he knows that they really need it. What a lesson does this teach us, my dear brethren, with regard to quietness and contentedness and confidence in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call us. How common it is to think that we could have done better

in some other position, or some other circumstances. If we could only get rid of this trial, or if we could only attain that advantage, we think, how much better we should get on. That shows we rather lean to our own judgment than to the judgment of our Shepherd: that we have not learned this very first lesson of the text, that "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," for we continually desire to feed ourselves with such things as we think suitable; postponing His judgment and His wisdom to our own. I quite understand, my dear brethren, that it is very much easier to know this than it is to work it out; I quite understand how much easier it is to know what one ought to be than actually to be it. Of course it is not difficult to understand that He Who knows all things, and Whose heart is love, is sure to do the best, not only on account of His wisdom, but on account of His love. But to sit down quietly under that knowledge is a very high Christian attainment. To have no

thought straying beyond the edge of the fold in which Christ has placed us; to have no thought stirring but the hearty desire to do our work thoroughly where we are called—this, I say, is a very high Christian attainment. Such, then, is the character of the lesson connected with submissiveness to the Shepherd who feeds His flock with food convenient for them.

But on this subject we are taught (John x. 3 and 9), that the shepherd "leadeth them out," and they "shall go in and out and find pasture." You see, although He sets bounds to our habitation, and leads us in and out, yet He gives us Christian liberty (always, of course, responsible to Him and to His Word), in order that we may, by the exercise of our own judgment to a certain extent, alter the pasture when Christ opens the door of the fold; still He leads them forth. Christians go from place to place in the service of the Lord; and a happy thing it is when a man can see that the Lord is

leading him forth ; when he can go with all the comfort and the confidence with which Israel went when the pillar of fire or of cloud moved before them. When that rested, they were to rest ; when that moved, they were to move. They had thus, you see, very visible tokens of God's will. You and I constantly have to glean these tokens from the Word of God, or from the dispensations of His providence, or from a variety of circumstances by which God deals with us, and teaches us. But the most important thing of all, my dear brethren, is, under all circumstances, to keep your heart fixed upon *Him*, and to be constantly inquiring, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" "Do not let my self-will overbear Thy direction ; do not let the bent of my mind, set upon this or that, blind me to the obligation I am under to obey Thy will." Many persons think, with regard to moving their position, that it is desirable to see the door shut behind, as well as opened before. I do not think

that all persons are so clearly guided. There has to be an exercise of judgment in connexion with their trust in the Lord. I cannot doubt the Lord deals with different persons according to their different graces. He gives to one a strong judgment, and to another a tender affection for Him. He gives to one quietness of spirit wherever he may be ; to another, perhaps, a more anxious turn of mind. But yet the Lord leads them all in His own good way. They thus "go in and out, and find pasture," and the spiritual life of believers is nourished with such food as the world knows not of.

Now in this food for the flock there is a great variety, and sometimes, I need not say, it is such as the flock murmur at bitterly. But bitter herbs are often wholesome ; and the Lord knows when it is needful for His flock to taste them. May it be ours, my dear brethren, when we have to eat such bitter food, to receive it humbly, with an earnest desire to gain the benefit of it. I

believe the Lord very frequently makes our circumstances bitter because He would bless us with greater spirituality of mind, because He would fasten our hearts more upon Himself. But I think far more frequently we make our circumstances bitter by refusing submission to the will of the Lord, and by maintaining our self-will in spite of all God's dealings.

Now of Himself the Lord says, "I am the bread of life." This is the real support of the flock. I entreat you to mark well the words that I have quoted,—"*I am the bread of life.*" Therefore the support of the flock is not Christianity, but Christ; not the knowledge of truth, but the knowledge of a Person; not the knowledge of doctrine merely, but the reality of doctrine as comprised in Christ Himself. He is Himself the very essence of the support of the flock. His life is their life, His strength is their strength, His wisdom is their wisdom, His Spirit is their spirit. Beyond all doubt the

Word of God is the grand nutriment of the flock. The sacred pages of Scripture may be likened to green pastures, in which the flock find refreshment, support, and rest. What says David (Ps. cxix. 103)? "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Again, what says Jeremiah (chap. xv. 16)? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Such is the Word of God, when applied by the Holy Ghost to the heart, that it becomes the very spirit and life of the believer's soul. You remember what our Lord says (John vi. 63), "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." And we know that "He gives them good doctrine," filling them "with knowledge and understanding" (Prov. iv. 2, and Jer. iii. 15).

Again, the ministry of the Word and the sacraments which Christ has ordained are all for the support of the flock. But do not

stop short in them, because they are only means to an end. The preaching of the Word is to give you spiritual life, and to bring you acquainted with Christ; the sacraments are to sustain that life, and to bring you nearer to Himself. They are all to be used reverently and thankfully, but remember, they are only signs of a thing signified. The real substance, the real power, the real value of them is nothing less than communion with the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Again, the flock is fed with the influences of the Holy Spirit of God, which sometimes fall on the believer's soul "like the dew of Hermon upon the hill of Zion." We cannot tell when it falls; we are not conscious of how it falls; but we can tell that it has fallen by the effect it produces, and the influence we feel. So, my dear brethren, if your are looking for the influence of God's Holy Spirit, it will come in ten thousand ways you think not, and at ten thousand times, too, when you do not suspect it. God

will send you blessings by the remembrance of some text in His Word; when you are doing some little Christian act for Christ's sake; when you are speaking some kindly word to some way-worn traveller; when you are striving to speak a word of truth to those that are in ignorance; when you are trying to comfort those that are cast down. You will find that in endeavouring to strengthen, and help others, your own soul is refreshed. One of the ways in which the Holy Spirit feeds the flock is by showing unto them more and more "of the things of Christ;" teaching them and "guiding them into all truth," even that truth which can make them free indeed from the bondage of the world, and lift them more and more above the temptations of the flesh and the devil.

Again, our Lord feeds His flock by afflictions: for "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son Whom He receiveth;" and although "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but

grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Do not forget that word "exercised." The affliction is to tell, it is to make its mark; it is to stir you up, so to speak, from your nest in which you may have settled yourself. Affliction comes to make you feel that this is not your rest. And you see, indeed, many of God's children most strangely chastened; but the object is "not for His pleasure, but for their profit, that they might be partakers of His holiness." And if we could, under the afflictions which the Lord sends, take this view of them, "This is sent for my good; this is no caprice (if I may venture reverently to use such a word of God) this is no caprice on the part of my Father; this is not *merely* to try me, but this is to bless me by trying me: this is to bless me by trying my graces. Just as the limbs of children require to be strengthened by exercise, so the graces of the Christian are

strengthened by being called into play. There are a great many things we have to learn, and God is a skilful Teacher, and affliction is one of His very fruitful modes. Many persons have had reason to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." By this means many ignorant, unbelieving sinners have been turned into believing, humble servants of God. And surely, my dear brethren, there cannot be a greater blessing than for a soul to be brought, whatever may be the process, to the knowledge of the Lord.

Thus, then, does the Good Shepherd give to all their portion of meat in due season, and it delights His heart to see the flock growing in grace, and in the fruits of the Spirit. He says, if you remember, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

There is great comfort in the expression (John x. 4), "He putteth forth His own sheep, and goeth before them." Here you

see you are not called to stir one step without the presence of the Shepherd; nor are you called to go anywhere whither Christ has not been before you. He does not ask you to do anything in the way of service that He has not set you an example of; He does not ask you to go in any path of difficulty where He has not been your precursor; He has gone before you in the path of faith and holiness; in labours of love, doing good to all; yea, He has gone before you in the rugged path of reproaches, of necessities, of sufferings, and even of death. Every path you have to walk in has been sanctified by the footsteps of your Lord. And He still goes before you, often unseen, often unfelt, and, alas! still more often unheeded, but still present; He will not leave you nor forsake you, but will be with you even unto the end. This may be an encouragement to you, my brethren, in the various modes of discipline by which the Lord is fitting you for His kingdom. Probably in this congrega-

tion there are no two cases alike; but then you have the consolation of knowing that He is wise and skilful, and can adapt, with the utmost accuracy and exactness, His mode of dealing to your particular case.

But as a flock consists of old and young, of weak and strong, of healthy and sick, all equally the objects of the shepherd's care, so is Christ's care extended equally to every age and condition of the believer's life. In Christ's flock there are lambs—converts young in years and grace, whose condition is likened unto that of babes—babes in Christ, whose eyes are just opened to the light of heavenly truth, and who require to be fed with "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." There are those also represented in the text as "with young," who are convinced by the Holy Spirit of their sin, and yet travail mournfully in the heavenly birth, and have not that strong faith by which they can receive "the record that God hath given to them eternal

life," and by which they can overcome all those doubts and fears, which Satan is ever on the watch to inject and which destroy their peace. Now such should take the comfort of the text—"He will gently lead them," teaching them "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," as they are "able to bear it;" by degrees "giving power to the faint, and to them that have no might increasing strength." Let not such be weary in well doing, still less let them think themselves forgotten. Such was the fear of Zion of old:—"The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But what was the answer of God by the prophet? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Now if we could always bear this in mind, that *Christ's love is more than a mother's*, more than that love which we can never sufficiently appreciate. Oh! tenderly as a

mother loves her child, the Lord loves His people more. There may be circumstances the strain of which is so sharp as to make the mother forget her child. But the Lord never forgets His children. Would that we could deal with this as a fact.

But it is especially of Christ's dealings with the lambs of the flock that I would speak. By the "lambs" we may understand weak believers, but still *real* believers. The expression has nothing necessarily to do with age, either natural or spiritual. They that have been quickened by the Spirit of God but a short time, may have "more understanding than their teachers" (Ps. cxix. 99). Through the sovereignty of God's teachings there is often great power of spiritual life, where but a short time before was a barren wilderness; but the desert soul has become "as the garden of the Lord." While, on the other hand, some who have been quickened by the life of Christ for years are still very weak in faith—but as

"lambs." Now these "lambs," called in Scripture "babes," must be dealt with as such. But here is your comfort, my dear brethren, you whose faith is weak, the babe is not less dear to the mother than her other children. Nay, one often sees, when a troop of children enters a room, although there is a smile of love upon the face of the mother for each, it is the babe that she takes to her bosom. We may from this learn lessons of Christian love to the weak members of Christ's flock. There are believers who are weak in faith. We see it in their degree of knowledge; they know little of the Word of God, little of Christ, little of themselves, little of the world, little of the hard and rough paths of trial in which they have to walk, little of the conflict they will have to maintain. They once thought, perhaps, their conflict would soon be over, but it seems rather to deepen and increase. And this conflict (remember I speak now of real believers, although only weak ones), this

conflict, which is the work of the Holy Spirit of God within, "lusting against the flesh," they are often much cast down by. They know little of the ways of the Holy Spirit, little of the sinfulness of their own hearts; they depend more on feeling than on faith; they are more depressed by the workings of sin within, than they are encouraged and strengthened by the promises of the Word of God to them and for them. They have indistinct views of Christ and His great atonement, of His perfect righteousness, of the complete satisfaction He has made for sin; and so, forgetting that all this is accounted to them by faith, they think more of their own frames and feelings than of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So they are weak; and all because they look at the work of the Holy Spirit *in* them rather than at Christ's work *for* them; they seek comfort in *sanctification* rather than in *justification;* they look for peace in themselves instead of in Christ. Whereas it is not

being sanctified by the Spirit we have peace; but "being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and this makes an immeasurable difference.

Again, such often discourage themselves by dwelling more on what they suffer than on what Christ has suffered for them, forgetting that their own sufferings are only in the way of discipline, whereas Christ's were in the way of satisfaction. No wonder they are weak. They have no firm ground to stand upon. They dwell on their own bitter cup, instead of thinking of Him who can turn their bitter into sweet. They think, too, of what they have to give up for the gospel, more than of what Christ gave up for them, and of what they will gain by what they give up. Oh, my dear brethren, I believe it to be a great truth that God never asks you and me to give up anything without having something better to give us instead. We may think, when we relinquish what is very dear, that we have no-

thing in exchange; but oh! we have, we have peace. We have the comfort of doing right, instead of the misery of rebellion; we have the comfort of being in the path of service, instead of in the path of unrest. And although we may often mourn the loss of that which we give up, yet there is no guilt in connexion with our mourning (unless it becomes murmuring), as there is when we hug our sins. Sin breeds sorrow. Affliction may often produce sorrow, but the difference between the sorrow connected with sin, and the sorrow of mere affliction, is that the one has a sting in it, and the other has none. One may cause "godly sorrow, that worketh repentance unto salvation;" the other may cause "the sorrow of the world, which worketh death." The one will work faith, the other will work remorse. And surely this is a great difference. There are many persons who are inclined to say with Peter, "Lo, we have left all." But oh, my brethren, what an *all* is this compared

with what Christ left for you ;—the Father's bosom. Be assured that one cause of spiritual weakness is this constant dwelling upon self instead of upon Christ. Such persons study self more than they study Christ, and then they are weak in courage—they have none ; weak in power—they can do nothing ; weak in love—it centres all in self. There is no expansiveness ; there is no going forth to others. Why, how constantly we see it, my brethren,—persons that are in affliction, perhaps, unable to get out much, to have much intercourse with others. A great many persons visit them, but it is always in the way of sympathy, giving out to them, compassionating them, pitying them, making them still think more and more of self. But when those persons recover a little, let them make an effort, and go to see other people, and give out to others, instead of always craving to take in, and how wonderfully they are improved then. What a change it makes when

once we are occupied with the sorrows of others, instead of always circling just round our own. Oh, it is not good for some minds always to be taking in human sympathy, but it is a good thing to be giving out. The happiest people are those that have large sympathies for the sorrows of others; who endeavour to cast their own cares upon the Lord, and who receive from Him that help and support by which they are comforted themselves, and are enabled to comfort others. As I have said, then, these persons are weak because they look in, and not out; down, and not up; so they forget what Christ is, and dwell only on what they themselves are—poor, and wretched, and miserable. They forget all the promises of God, and that His Word is like Himself—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But still, my brethren, we must not forget that these persons form a part of the true flock of Christ. They are redeemed by the same precious blood, purchased by God

Himself, quickened by the Holy Ghost. They know the Shepherd's voice, and they love it, and a stranger will they not follow: they earnestly desire to walk with God; and I may add they are dear to Christ. It is for such feeble ones that many a promise of the Word of God is given; for such the tenderness of Christ's character is particularly intended. His forbearance, His long suffering, His meekness, His patience, His gentleness—all find exercise among the "lambs." Lambs, we know, form a large part of every flock; and so in every Church of God on earth they who are weak are a very large proportion compared with those who are strong. Some of you whom I address may be strong in faith, giving glory to God. "Ye then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please yourselves." Imitate your Lord; carry these lambs in your bosom to a throne of grace; make their case your own; throw yourselves into their circumstances, and plead for them

as you would for yourselves. Above all, let me say, put no occasion of stumbling in your weak brother's way, either by your example, by your hardness, or by your want of tenderness and sympathy.

Now let us see how Christ deals with them. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Just think for a moment Who this is. It is He Who, as we are taught in this same chapter, "hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," and before Whom all nations are as nothing. This "mighty God" is the tender "Shepherd" of the text, Who laid down His life for the sheep, and was "led as a lamb to the slaughter," that they might escape. And when we think of how He deals with the lambs of His flock—"He gathers them with His arm, carries them in His bosom." Where

are they? In His bosom. What wondrous love! What do you take to your bosom? A thing you hate? A person you despise? No; one you love. And the very helplessness of such, if we love them, makes them almost more dear and more welcome because they are so. Which child does the mother watch over the most tenderly? The sick one. Which does the shepherd care for the most among all the flock? The wounded lamb. And when we read this of Christ, what does it imply? It implies *His boundless love.* It tells us that the love which made Him die for them impels Him to carry them in His bosom. Our Lord proved His words by His acts. His words are the truths of His heart; His acts are the realities of His love.

And further, as Jesus is the only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of His Father, and in consequence of that nearness is able to declare the Father to us—"the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father,

He hath declared Him"—so who can say what is implied by the lamb being carried in the bosom of the Good Shepherd? Such a position implies nearness, affection, confidence. We read of God's people, they are "a people near unto Him" (Ps. cxlviii. 14). Now, my dear brethren, as the Lord Jesus, lying in the Father's bosom, was so able to declare Him unto us, we may consider how many secrets are whispered in such an attitude, when one is lying upon the bosom of another. There are things we reserve for the secret ear of Jesus; sins which we tell to no one else, blemishes we would never confess to another; thoughts we mourn over in secret, but could not tell to any but Christ. And if it is so between us and Him, so also is it between Him and us. It is thus from nearness we learn the secrets of His heart and love; it is thus from nearness that we hear Him whisper "I have shed my blood for you. Notwithstanding thy sins, I am thy Advocate, thy Brother, thy Friend, thy

High Priest; notwithstanding all, I love thee with an everlasting love, and will carry thee and keep thee to the end." Oh! it is in such nearness some of the sweetest communion is realised; stilling the soul under trouble, and quieting our fears in deepest trial.

And His "bosom" is not only a place of love and peace, but of safety too. Who can touch the lamb there sheltered without touching the Shepherd? "Our life is hid with Christ in God." His life is our life, and He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Oh, beloved brethren, surely while He has a will to gather us, and an arm to carry us, and a bosom of love in which to lay us, we need not fear: we may be at peace; for His words are, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, and no man shall pluck thee out of My hand."

Let none say, "These things are too good to be true; such love can never be intended for such as I am." I ask, why not? Are

you not a sinner? Alas, you say, I am. Well then, for sinners Christ died, for sinners Christ lives, for sinners He now pleads before the throne. It is the erring and the straying He gathers with His arm; it is weak, feeble sinners He carries in His bosom. But you say again, "Oh, such love, such tenderness, which I have outraged ten thousand times, it can never be for me." I say again, brother, for *thee*, if you will accept it. If your sins be true, if they are great, miserable facts; so is Christ's love true—a great and a glorious fact. It is not more true that you are a sinner than that Christ is a Saviour; and as a Saviour He invites you to believe His love. His love is the very genius of the gospel, and if I present our Lord Jesus Christ in any another aspect to you I misrepresent Him. It is a love you may have often made light of, that you may have despised; but it is love still; love on which the weary may cast themselves, and be at rest. Brethren, think upon that word, *rest*.

And I would ask you in conclusion, what is it you are leaning on? Is it the world? Oh! that is but a stony pillow, on which no heart ever found repose. Is it on the creature? Creatures all must fail. Some of you perhaps are thinking at this very moment of some you dearly loved, with whom you lived and walked in tenderest affection; but whose place now knows them no more. You know by sad and bitter experience there is no secure and abiding rest for the heart in the creature: such must one day fail us. But if you lean on Him Who died "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God;" Who "bare our sins in His own body on the tree;" Who "justifieth the ungodly;" here is a resting-place indeed for time as well as eternity.

God give us all grace to believe in such a "Good Shepherd" as this. God give us all grace to lay our cares, and our fears, and our sorrows on the heart of Christ. Trials we must have here; weakness we must know;

but our refuge, beloved brethren, under all, is to lay our hearts upon this truth,—"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."

Think not, my dear brethren, that this representation of the love of Christ, and His readiness to receive the chief of sinners, will in any way tend to produce inconsistency or carelessness of life—no; not if a person *really* trusts and *really* leans upon the Lord. Leaning is the attitude of confidence and affection; one we should never adopt where we did not trust; and when we trust Christ we shall love Him, and when we love Him we shall obey Him, and desire to keep His commandments. Then we shall find that the love which attracts us will also keep us; then we shall understand the exhortation of the Apostle Jude,—"Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God." Yes, there is nothing can keep you in close com-

munion with each other so securely as love. Interest cannot; it is love that binds your hearts together—parents and children, husbands and wives, friends and relatives;—the closest bond is love. Much more true is it of the love of Jesus. That is a constraining love; that is a love which will enable you to yield yourselves to Him, as One Who died for you, and rose again.

I add but one word of warning to believers. If one sheep goes astray, how prone the others are to follow. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." And let us all strive to live upon the words of the text; let us all strive to live upon Christ, upon His atonement, upon His power, upon His love, upon His promises, upon His grace, and then we shall be able to realise the truth of the text—fed with food convenient for us, gathered with His arm, carried in His bosom, and gently led when we are travailing in the heavenly birth.

LECTURE VI.

"THE CHIEF SHEPHERD APPEARING."

1 PETER v. 14.

"*And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*"

THESE words were addressed, as you will see, to "the elders" or overseers of the Church, to encourage them to "feed the flock of God which was among them," and to set them a good example, by being themselves what they wished others to be; and then, when the Chief Shepherd should appear, they should receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

We are here led to consider "the Chief Shepherd" of the flock; to Whom under-

shepherds and all must submit. But He is the same Lord Jesus we have spoken of all along;—first as "Jehovah's Shepherd;" then as "the Good Shepherd," dying for the sheep; then as "the Great Shepherd," rising again; then as "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls," gathering and restoring the straying; then as "the Shepherd," feeding, guiding, and preparing; and now, lastly, as "the Chief Shepherd," appearing again to bestow a crown of glory that fadeth not away. And I trust, my brethren, our hearts may be lifted up in connexion with the subject this morning, which brings before us the great consummation, the result of the Shepherd's preparation of His flock, and His bestowal of the great reward which He has in store for them. And if we have been listening in a prayerful spirit to what has gone before, I trust that the Lord God the Holy Ghost will enable us to anticipate our interest in that which is yet to come, and to feel that there is for

us individually a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

There are three points for our consideration :—

I. The Chief Shepherd.
II. His appearing.
III. The reward He confers.

1. "The Chief Shepherd." We have to recognise our Lord Jesus Christ as One Who has the oversight of all, both under-shepherds and their flocks too. In this respect, we must consider Him as Jehovah, the omnipresent, the omniscient, the almighty God, ever with His shepherds and their flocks, constantly regarding them. Oh what weighty thoughts are these! When we think of the varied interests of the shepherds and their flocks; the endless differences of their circumstances in life; their states of feeling; their condition of mind, body, and estate; their ages, their dispositions, their tempers, their callings: and that

each is dealt with in the very best way; that not the smallest mistake is ever made in the trials sent, or in the grace given to meet them; in the means that are used to produce the certain end; but that all is ordered "after the counsel of His own will," with the same precision and exactness of adaptation as if but one case had to be dealt with;—must we not say of this "Chief Shepherd," this can be no other than He Who, in the 9th of Isaiah, is called "Wonderful," or "Secret," for the mystery of His dealings; "Counsellor," for His wisdom; and "The mighty God," for the power displayed in all He does? What a lesson this ought to be for us under-shepherds;—that we are always being scrutinised to see whether we are faithful to God's truth; whether we are preaching "in simplicity and godly sincerity" the Word of God; whether we are teaching the people to honour the Lord Jesus, and to honour the Spirit in all His offices, Who alone reveals to us Jesus;

whether we are teaching them to adhere simply to the written Word, and not to turn aside to the vain traditions of men; whether we are making them feel their responsibility to the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and warning them that they must give an account of the things done in the body. Oh! these things ought to make us earnest. And when we consider, again, that the Lord Jesus is always looking at the spirit in which we preach; whether we are preaching with earnestness, as if we ourselves believed that the subjects upon which we speak are of vital importance; or whether we are falling into a careless and unconcerned condition of mind, regardless really of our own interest and the welfare of the flock, and indifferent alike to the honour of the Lord and our own souls' salvation. And, my dear brethren, you too should remember that the Lord is ever looking into your hearts to see what you feel when you come to hear His Word; whether you are amongst those that really

and truly are listening to the voice of the "Good Shepherd," attending to it; or whether you are merely of those that sit amongst the people of God, that listen to the preached Word as you would to a pleasant song; who with your lips can show much love, while your heart is all the while going after your particular covetousness. Christ sees all this. You are under the scrutinising eye of the Chief Shepherd this morning, and the lesson is no less for you than it is for me.

2. But this "Chief Shepherd" is He *from Whom all under-shepherds derive their commission.* All true and real under-shepherds are ministers of Christ—nothing less. They are selected and qualified for their work by the Holy Ghost—that is, if they are properly qualified. And although, seeing we cannot read hearts, "we ought to judge those lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in

the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard," as the 23d Article of our Church teaches; yet those only, I repeat, are *real ministers of Christ* who are called by the Holy Ghost. All others must be classed, my brethren, with "thieves and robbers;" all others must be classed with those that attempt to climb into the fold "by some other way." Many climb into the fold by their talents, by their station, by their connexion with those that have authority to send men forth; but we should remember that it is only those of whom the Holy Ghost has said, as He did of Paul and Barnabas, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them" —these only are the real ministers of Christ; these only are His true servants; these only are men who feed the flock of God aright; who feed them from that Word which God has made precious to their own souls, and which is made precious to the souls of all His people; for that Word is the

only food by which the flock are to be nourished. Should not all ministers pray for the Holy Spirit of God, that they may do His work in His way, by the ministry of His holy Word? For it is the "Church of God," not merely a congregation of people—it is "the Church of God over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers."

3. The Chief Shepherd is He *on Whom the under-shepherds depend for their sufficiency.* We may well take heed to Paul's words, speaking of the solemnity of preaching,—"We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). And who that really understands this responsibility could bear it but for Christ's help and strength? and who could think himself capable of such a work but he who is trusting in Christ's strength?

This it is that makes "able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 6). Yes, to be filled with Christ's spirit, and to be like Him, is the grand endowment of an under-shepherd. And as Christ's moving spring in His character as Shepherd was love, so should it be a minister's. What an instructive lesson have we on this point in our Lord's dealings with Peter. You remember what He said to him? He did not say, Art thou wise? Art thou learned? Art thou eloquent, Peter? but "Lovest thou Me?" Then "feed My sheep," feed My flock. Yes, it is love to Christ which begets love to His people's souls, and a desire to feed them; for they are precious to Him. It is this which awakens sympathy between the preacher and the people. It is this fire of love which warms up the cold hearts of the hearers very often. Sympathy goes forth in the expression of the face; in the glance of the eye; by any gesture of the body

which is the expression of warmth of love to the Lord Jesus; and many hearts have been thus warmed, through the mercy of God, which had been cold under the mere declarations of God's holy Word. Of course I do not mean to undervalue God's holy Word, but I mean that the Holy Ghost is ever honouring a spirit of love and dependence upon the Lord Jesus, to quicken and animate those that are brought into contact with the preached Word.

I have said that this love to God begets love to people's souls. What is it that makes men love to work in the cause of God? What is it that makes people earnestly anxious to ferret out, in their abodes of dirt and misery, poor ruined and lost souls? It is love to Christ. And what makes them take pains in this work, and give thought and care to it? What is it that makes it all seem light? It is love. Jacob, for the love he had to Rachel, endured cheerfully all that was laid upon him—the

cold of the nights, and the heat of the days; yea, the seven years he served seemed but as a few days for the love he had to her. And so it is with ministers of the gospel; so it is with all workers in the gospel field; so it is with all those that undertake the least work for the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Bible-woman; the tract-distributor—what makes them endure all the jeers of an ungodly crowd? It is love for souls; springing from love to the Lord Jesus; and we have some of the most valiant workers in the fold of the Lord amongst these humble and unostentatious labourers, that are worthy of all honour, as persons whom the Holy Ghost, we trust, has chosen to bring glory to the Lord Jesus. Yes, my brethren, it is from the Lord Jesus that every supply we need must be drawn. From Him a minister gets faith and hope, and that which is the greatest of all, charity or love. And you have no other source of supply, you who

may not, perhaps, be very active labourers visibly in Christ's fold, although I trust you are all occupying that sphere which God has given you at home. We need not go abroad to be messengers of Christ. The mother should be a messenger of Christ to her children, the brother to the sister, the husband to the wife, and so on. In all our relations there should be an outgoing of the power of Christ's life which may communicate the spark of life to others. And it should teach us to live in love, to live in a spirit that becomes the gospel, regarding each other as brethren in the Lord, heirs of the same heavenly kingdom, on our way to receive the same crown of glory. But there is still another lesson;

4. It is this "Chief Shepherd" to *Whom the flock belongs.* It is His; His, by the gift of the Father; His, by the purchase of His own blood; His, by covenant engagement. He gave His life for the sheep; and He will give eternal life to them. They are

under His particular care, to feed, and to guide, and to discipline. They are His now, and they will be His hereafter, when He maketh up His jewels; for He will lose none, but raise them up at the last day. Is it true, then, my brethren, that the flock really belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we really His? Is every man that believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God really His? Has he been bought actually with a price? Then do not forget the lesson. "Ye are not your own," but *His* Who bought you; you are to glorify Him in your body and in your spirit, which are His. Oh, think of this. And think what a value Christ sets upon all His sheep. There is no sheep so lean, so poor, so despised, but if it be a real sheep of Christ's fold it is precious to the Lord. And just as truly as "right dear in the sight of the Lord," under all circumstances, "is the death of His saints;" so right dear, under all circumstances, is the least sheep of Christ's fold.

He that toucheth one of them toucheth the apple of His eye. Look then, my brethren, upon those that belong to the Lord Jesus with peculiar love; endeavour to honour them, to help them, and to show that you regard them as brethren, in the very best relation in life in which we can stand to each other—united together by the blood and spirit of the Lord Jesus.

5. Again,—it is "the Chief Shepherd" to *Whom all must give account.* What do we read (Matt. xxv. 31, &c.)? "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth His sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." Nothing can be more impressive; nothing can be more unmistakably clear, and nothing should be felt to be more solemn. And

observe the minuteness of His notice of men's conduct. "*I* was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; *I* was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; *I* was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; *I* was sick, and ye visited Me; *I* was in prison, and ye came unto Me." He sees the secret springs of men's actions; He sees the motives which actuate them; He knows whether they think of Him and His glory in what they do; and He deals with them accordingly. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap." And while the "cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall in nowise lose its reward," the very casting out of devils, and doing wonderful works in His name, if not done in the right spirit will be regarded but as works of iniquity (Matt. vii. 22, 23). Oh then, I say to all of you, look into your hearts; try to see what it is you really mean. When you do a right thing, is it merely to gratify a kindly disposition, or has it a deeper source—love to

the Lord Jesus? When you are kind to the poor, is it that you desire to show your love to the Lord Christ, or is it merely that your nature prompts you to pity and relieve the distressed? My brethren, I would not disparage any kindly feeling, but I do warn you against resting on mere kindly feeling. You may "give all your goods to feed the poor;" you may "give your body to be burned," in proof of the earnestness with which you hold certain opinions; but if what you give and what you suffer be not prompted by love to the Lord, and love to His cause and people, it is before Him but as nothing; and you yourself but "as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal;" sounding indeed in men's ears, having made perhaps a great noise in the world through your ostentation and your charity, but yet having had nothing to do with the Lord Jesus in all. I wish you to consider your spirit, then. The Lord Jesus considers your spirit; the Lord Jesus decides upon the quality of

your conduct by looking into your heart to see from what that conduct springs. And as this is the kind of scrutiny you will have to stand at the last, I tell you now to look within. See whether love to the Lord is the real spring of all your conduct. With what earnestness should we look to this "Chief Shepherd," that we may "make our calling and election sure;" how should we pray to "abide in Him; that, when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John ii. 28).

And this leads me to the second point—

II. *His appearing.* I understand this of His coming again to make the final award. I understand it in the sense in which it occurs in Colossians iii. 4:—"When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Christ is to come again. This has always been the joyous expectation of the Church; it is the

grand hope which is constantly set before us in the New Testament to cheer us in our daily pilgrimage. And, my brethren, although this hope, in its fulfilment, may seem long deferred, there is nothing to rob you of it, but everything to quicken it and to give it more practical force. Prophecy is unfolding her roll, and whatever may be the differences between interpreters of prophecy, as to "the time of the end," we may at least take up the words of Paul (Rom. xiii. 11, 12), and say,—"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." And in proportion to the vividness of this hope should be the earnestness of our life, that we may be found of the Lord at that day "in peace without spot and blameless."

I need not bring scriptures upon this subject to show you that our Lord will come again. There is scarcely a page in the Gospels and Epistles which does not state it. But in addition to what is written

in the Word, there are reasons in His character and dispensations which confirm it. For instance,

1. *Christ loves His people still.*—Yes, as truly now He is in heaven as when He was on earth. His is everlasting love, not affected by lapse of time, and change of circumstances. There is no forgetting on the part of Christ. His love is stronger than the mother's to her babe. And as Joseph's heart was unchanged towards his brethren, and burst forth in tenderness when he made himself known to them, so our Lord is only waiting "till His enemies be made His footstool," when "He will come again, and receive His people unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also."

2. Again,—*He retains His relation to His people still.* He is the Head; they are the members. He is the Elder Brother, they, brethren, and children of the same God and Father. He is "Heir of all things," they, "joint heirs with Him." He is "the Fore-

runner," they are to follow after; He, their Representative, seated in His throne; they, soon to sit with Him really and visibly, as they sit mystically and by faith with Him now. And if, as "the Good Shepherd," He could say in the days of His humiliation, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand;" shall they in the days of His glory be plucked out of His hand? No. As truly as, "whether present or absent, they labour to be accepted of Him" (2 Cor. v. 9), so He, whether present or absent, loves and owns them. If He did not retain and acknowledge the relation, how should He feel their infirmities, and promise to relieve them (Heb. iv. 15, 16)? Why did He say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Because the saints at Damascus were one with Him by faith, and He acknowledged the relation. Yes, my brethren, this is a strong reason. Our Lord never forgets; our Lord never ceases to love; our Lord never ceases to acknowledge

one that belongs to Him by faith. However obscure they may be, however low their position in this world, yet they are "kings and priests unto God." And though, for the supply of daily bread, they may be confined to the drudgery of life, yet they are upon the full march to the land of everlasting blessedness. They do not cease to belong to the Lord, nor does He cease in any way whatever to retain and acknowledge the relationship.

3. There is another reason :—*His covenant remains the same.* What says David (2 Sam. xxiii. 5) ? "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; this is all my salvation and all my desire." His promise is sure, and shall never fail. Hear ye the word of the Lord, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord

that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. liv. 10). Besides, we must not forget the Persons between Whom this covenant is made, and in Whose character it is secure. The Persons in the covenant of redemption are the Father and the Son; and it is generally understood that the 2d Psalm represents this:—"Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Here, I say, is the covenant of redemption. In the 89th Psalm we understand the covenant of grace;—My covenant shall stand fast with *Him;*" that is, Christ, Who is the Mediator of that covenant. The covenant of grace is between the Father and believers in Christ, "My covenant will I not break; His seed shall endure for ever;"—His seed, of which Christ is "the everlasting Father." "His seed shall endure for ever;" they are all secure in Him. As I have said, here is the covenant of grace, in which there is a surety —Christ. But in the covenant of redemption there is none. The covenant of grace

is made with us in Christ; and this is our security. When Christ fails in His truth and faithfulness, then believers may begin to fear that Christ will not appear again; but He is bound and He has tied Himself by the covenant of grace to come and fetch all those who are interested in this everlasting covenant, of which He is Surety.

4. Once more:—*His honour, and office, and interest, and preparations, all engage Him to come again to His flock.* He has said—"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Now He that purchased the Church with His own blood hath entered into heaven for them with that very blood; He appears in the presence of God for them. He will not forsake them, because it is His good pleasure, as it is the Father's, "to give them the king-

dom." He that so dearly bought them and saved them when they were lost, will not lose them again now they are saved. He will come again for them; He will come and fulfil all that He has promised, and not one single thing shall fail of all that He has set before them.

It is true, my dear brethren, the condition of the Church during His absence is one of trial. She is appointed to affliction (1 Thess. iii. 3); indeed all Scripture testifies to the afflicted life of believers, and all "because they are not of the world." But observe how this matter is put by our Lord (John xvi. 22):—"Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Observe, it is "now ye have sorrow," —the present, compared with the future, time, with eternity,—"now ye have sorrow," not hereafter; it is joy then. Is the sorrow now? It must be short, it can't be long. As life is short, so must its sorrow be. As

"the pleasures of sin are but for a season," so the sufferings of the people of God are but for a season. And this season of suffering is only when there is a "needs be," when God has something to do by it, and I may add, something of *blessing* to do by it. Yes, God always means blessing. This is a dispensation of blessing. Christ came to save, not to condemn; God acts to bless, and not to punish. Oh, if we could but think of this—that in all God does He means our welfare. Just as when a kindly surgeon cuts deep, and occasions much pain, it is not to cause pain that he does it, but to cure; so the Lord in all the trials that He sends does not send them merely to afflict —that is only the accident connected with them; the end is blessing—blessing when this time-state shall be done with, and fulness of blessing when He shall come again, with a crown of glory in His hand. And this is the consolation, my dear brethren, for you who are tried;—the sufferings now are only

the preparation for reigning with Him in glory; they are to make you more capable of entering into that glory. Though God will not give the prize without the race, nor the crown without the conflict, yet He will not allow the race to be too long, nor the conflict too sharp, for your strength. Though our faith be tried in the fire, yet a loving Father will see that the furnace be not too hot, and He will see also that His children are not there longer than is necessary to separate the dross. I repeat to you, His object is not to consume, but to refine; not to destroy, but to prepare. And with regard to the temptations of the great adversary, which harass many of God's children sadly, if your time be short, so is his; and if he be permitted to go to certain lengths, yet there is a limit to his power. "Hitherto shalt thou come; but no farther." You remember how beautifully Paul puts this (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9), "We are troubled on every

side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." No—if there be a point to which the trial shall go, there is also one beyond which it shall not go; and He who directs the course of the trial is He Whose name is "Counsellor," He who is the "mighty God," "the everlasting Father," "the Prince of peace," under all circumstances. Be assured, my dear brethren, the *worst* that the devil *can do* and the *most* that God *will do* are only what is necessary. So that you may take up the language of Paul (Rom. viii. 18), and say "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." My dear brethren, it may teach you to kiss the rod which chastens you to think that it is a Father's hand that uses it: it is the touch of God, and that touch is always one of love and blessing.

Now look at the last point:—

III. *The reward He confers*—"a crown of glory that fadeth not away." But what glory? even His glory. Believers are to be with Him in His throne, (Rev. iii. 21); they are to behold His glory, and to share it too, (John xvii. 22 and 24). This thought is too wonderful for us; it is high; we cannot attain unto it. But that we shall share His glory is a point constantly insisted on by Peter (1 Pet. v. 1; and i. 7; and iv. 13; and v. 10). And St John also tells us that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." No merely mortal eye, in this state, has been able to endure this glory of God. Those favoured with it, as Moses, and Isaiah, and Peter, and John, have fallen before it. But when we are like Him; when these vile bodies are changed, and fashioned like unto His glorious body, then shall we see Him as He is, and be for ever with the Lord.

We know nothing, and can know nothing here, of Christ's glory. And so our gracious Lord, when He speaks of His coming again to present His Church to Himself, uses a term which is more intelligible to us than that of glory. He says, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Yes, my brethren, what I desire that you may be able to do, by the power of faith, is to anticipate this coming, this time of joy. You who are so familiar with disappointment and suffering now; you whose hearts are often aching with the daily troubles of this mortal life; to whom each day brings its full measure of trial and unrest, and who perhaps find most sorrow where you might naturally look for most joy,—I say, can you anticipate a time when your hearts shall rejoice, and rejoice for ever? Then you must look forward to your Lord's return; you must look to the "Chief Shepherd's" appearing. Then will there be joy. Oh what multitudes of

sorrows will then be ended; what multitudes of souls will then be comforted; what multitudes of desires and prayers will then be more than answered. How many that have sown in tears will then reap in joy; when all the labours of faith and patience of the saints shall be rewarded with those "rivers of pleasures, which are at God's right hand for evermore," ever flowing, and ever fresh, but ever substantially the same; when they shall hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world; receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Brethren, to comfort your hearts, think of the contrast between that time and this. No longer then under the power of evil, no longer in darkness, in ignorance, and unbelief; no longer under the pain and burden of a languid, feeble, corruptible body; no longer under the fear of Satan, and sin, and

death, and hell. Oh! what will it be to have done with such a world as this, and be transplanted at once to a condition of the most glorious kind, where no cloud shall again pass over the soul, but all be light and love for ever.

And then to see Him as He is—Him Who has been our help and stay all through life's pilgrimage; Him by Whose blood we were forgiven; by Whose Spirit we have been sanctified; by Whose grace we have been daily strengthened; and by Whose love and power we have been carried through all dangers, and are safe at last for ever.

But there is more than this. Christ *will not come alone.* "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "He cometh with ten thousand of His saints." Oh what meetings between those who loved each other in the Lord! How will heart leap to heart, never to part again. Parents and children, husbands

and wives, brothers and sisters, ministers and people, all one for ever. No sorrow, no sin, for ever. Never shall one cross thought, or look, or word, dim our joy; but all shall be sunshine for ever and ever. Yes, *for ever and ever.* Your joy no man taketh from you." Safe and secure in Christ for ever and ever. "A crown of glory that fadeth not away." Just as the old song is ever "a new song," so the crowns of glory are bright for ever and ever.

Look then, my brethren, for this day of Christ's appearing. Prepare for it; regard circumstances in its holy, joyful light. Balance the things of life by its solemn weight. Make this event—the coming of the Lord—tell upon all your actions. It is *the* event of the future, by the side of which all others dwindle into meanness and insignificance. The rise and fall of nations, the passing away of kingdoms, are but the tiny tinkling preludes to this grand consumma-

tion, which shall terminate the reign of sin and death, and perfect the joy of the saints for ever.

Dwell on this "Chief Shepherd," then. Your hope for eternal glory must be through Him alone. Make Christ your "all in all." Dwell on Him in all the relations in which He stands to His Church. Turn for comfort to these relations in which I have endeavoured to set Him forth to you. Think constantly Who He is—the one only Shepherd of God's appointment—Jehovah's Shepherd, God's Fellow. Think what He has done—how He has laid down His life for the sheep; how He has risen again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant; how He has atoned for all your sins, how He has purchased you with His own blood. Think again, of what He is doing;—how He is seeking, finding, gathering, feeding, teaching, preparing, keeping, all His sheep; in order that they may be with

Him eventually. And think yet what He will do;—He will come again, and give them "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

THE END.

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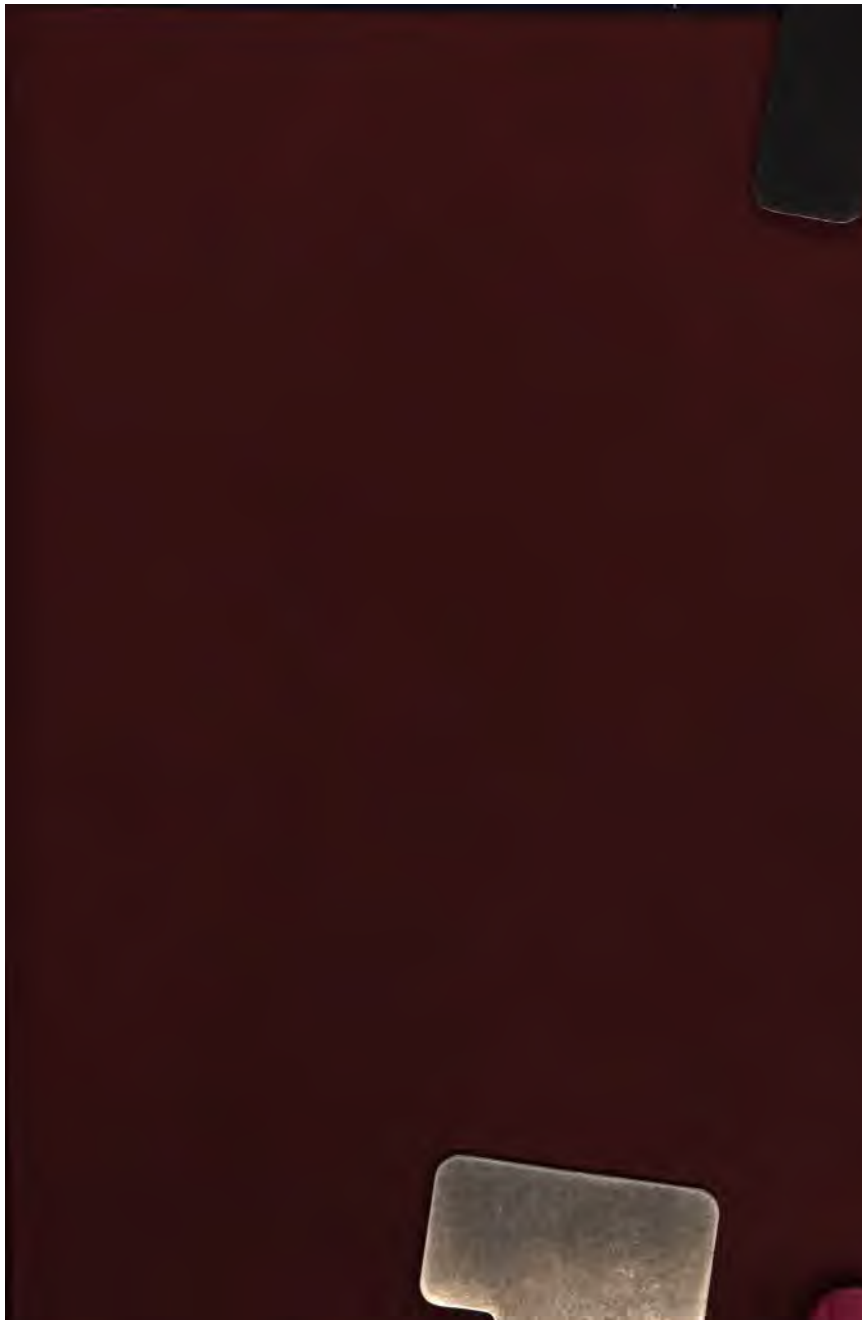
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